THE EASTERN CRISIS AND BRITISH POLICY

G. H. PERRIS

00028747

BOMBAY BRANCH

OF THE

Royal Asiatic Society.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Mr. Sangi
on 12 April, 2019

THE EASTERN CRISIS OF 1897 AND BRITISH POLICY IN THE NEAR EAST.

PERSEUS & ANDROMEDA: A NEW GREEK VERSION

Frontispiece.]

THE EASTERN CRISIS

OF 1897

AND

BRITISH POLICY

IN THE NEAR EAST.

BY

G. H. PERRIS.

28747 ac

WITH A POEM BY WILLIAM WATSON,

FRONTISPIECE BY WALTER CRANE,

AND A SKETCH MAP.

21-30

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED,

11, HENRIETTA STREET, W.C.

1897.

327.42
Per | Eas
28747

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

HELLAS, HAIL!

LITTLE land so great of heart,
'Midst a world so abject grown,—
Must thou play thy glorious part,
Hellas, gloriously alone?
Shame on Europe's arms, if she
Leave her noblest work to thee!

While she slept her sleep of death,
Thou hast dared and thou hast done;
Faced the Shape whose dragon breath
Fouls the splendour of the sun.
Thine to show the world the way,
Thine the only deed to-day.

Thou, in this thy starry hour,
Sittest throned all thrones above.
Thou art more than pomp and power,
Thou art liberty and love.
Doubts and fears in dust be trod:
On, thou mandatory of God!

Who are these, would bind thy hands?
Knaves and dastards, none beside.
All the just in all the lands
Hail thee blest and sanctified,—
Curst who would thy triumph mar,
Be he Kaiser, be he Czar.

Breathing hatred, plotting strife,
Rending beauty, blasting joy,
Loathsome round the tree of life
Coils the Worm we would destroy.
Whoso smites yon Thing Abhorred,
Holy, holy, is his sword.

Foul with slough of all things ill,
Turkey lies full sick, men say.
Not so sick but she hath still
Strength to torture, spoil, and slay!
O that ere this hour be past,
She were prone in death at last!

Kings, like lacqueys, at her call
Raise her, lest in mire she reel.
Only through her final fall
Comes the hope of human weal.
Slowly, by such deeds as thine,
Breaks afar the light divine.

Not since first thy wine-dark wave
Laughed in multitudinous mirth,
Hath a deed more pure and brave
Flushed the wintry cheek of Earth.
There is heard no melody
Like thy footsteps on the sea.

Fiercely sweet as stormy Springs,
Mighty hopes are blowing wide;
Passionate prefigurings
Of a world re-vivified:
Dawning thoughts, that ere they set
Shall possess the ages yet.

Oh! that *she* were with thee ranged,
Who for all her faults can still,
In her heart of hearts unchanged,
Feel the old heroic thrill;
She, my land, my loved, mine own!—
Yet thou art not left alone.

All the Powers that soon or late
Gain for Man some sacred goal
Are co-partners in thy fate,
Are companions of thy soul.
Unto these all earth shall bow:
These are Heaven, and these are thou.

WILLIAM WATSON.

February 23rd, 1897.

PREFACE.

PREFACES are an abomination, but two words must be said in this place. In the first place, I do not pretend that the following chapters are written without a bias of opinion and purpose; on the contrary, it must be the opinion and the purpose, if anything, which justify the book. But I do claim, and that most positively, that the body of fact needed for the testing of every opinion which has been offered is recited or indicated as the narrative proceeds. The narrative of events to the end of last year is mainly based upon the British Blue-Books; afterwards it has been sometimes necessary to rely on unofficial but responsible witnesses, whose identity in every essential instance is named. I do also claim to have regarded Mr. Gladstone's warning that "to infuse into this discussion the spirit or language of party would be to give a cover and apology to every sluggish and unmanly mind for refusing to offer its tribute to the common cause." If and where it has been necessary to criticise living statesmen it has been not at all in their quality of party leaders, but as the authors or agents of a foreign policy which seems to me to promise disgrace and loss for those

general interests that are beyond every party and still further beyond every personal interest.

I have to tender most cordial thanks to Mr. William Watson and Mr. Walter Crane for permission to reproduce two of the most valuable contributions to the awakening of British feeling during the recent crisis, as well as for other encouragement. Mr. Crane and Mr. Watson are not among those fair-weather friends of national independence and liberty who need the arbitrament of an irrelevant war to confirm or correct their original judgments. So far as the Cretan case and the Greek intervention is concerned, it is better to have those judgments just as they sprang freshly, irresistibly, in two minds which reflect and influence some of the strongest elements in the thought of our country, before the issue was enlarged and the venue moved. Mr. Watson has therefore made only a slight verbal correction in the poem since its original appearance. I have also to thank the proprietors and editor of the *Daily Chronicle* (in whose files of the last few months so much rarely excellent work lies buried) for permission to use the drawing and to reprint the poem.

G. H. P.

CHISWICK, *May 26th*, 1897.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

FRONTISPIECE: PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA: A NEW GREEK VERSION. By WALTER CRANE.

HELLAS, HAIL! By WILLIAM WATSON . . . vii

PREFACE ix

"THE ASSASSIN" AND HIS FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

AN EVIL HERITAGE 3

CHAPTER II.

"THE SICK MAN" BECOMES "THE ASSASSIN". . 27

CHAPTER III.

A RUSSIAN PROTECTORATE 53

CHAPTER IV.

DRIFTING—AT THE TAIL OF THE CONCERT . . 83

THE EVENTS IN CRETE.

CHAPTER V.

PAGE
THE CRISIS PREPARING 116

CHAPTER VI.

OUR ONE ACHIEVEMENT 139

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMING OF THE GREEKS 157

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRAGEDY OF ERRORS 177

CHAPTER IX.

THE VENGEANCE OF THE POWERS 201

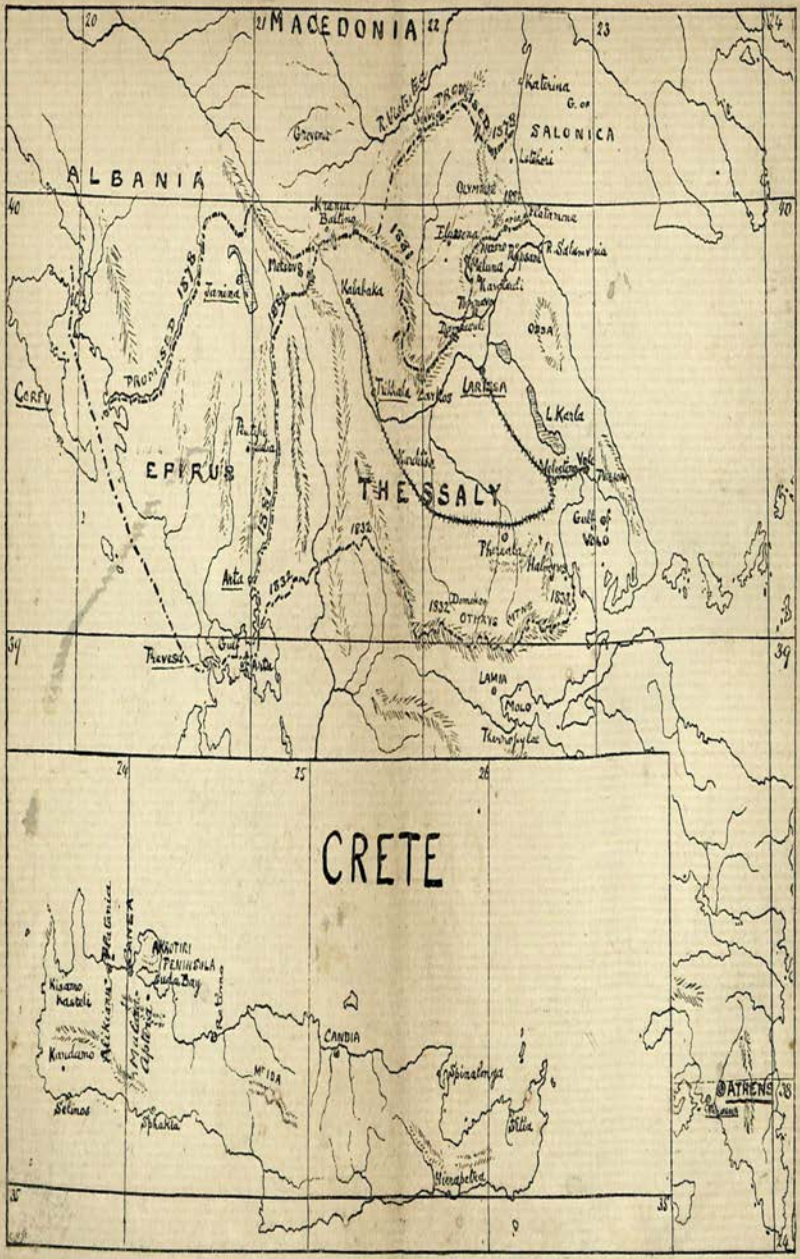
THE WAR: AND THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER X.

CONQUERED GREECE 225

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE "CONCERT OF EUROPE" . 257



SKETCH MAP OF CRETE, THE SEAT OF WAR, AND THE THREE FRONTIERS.

"THE ASSASSIN" AND HIS FRIENDS.

I.

"We have, I think, the most solemn and the greatest question to determine that has come before Parliament in my time. It is only under very rare circumstances that such a question—the question of the East—can be fully raised and fully brought home to the minds of men with that command which it ought to exercise over them. . . . It is the duty of every man to feel that he is bound for himself, according to his opportunities, to examine what belongs to this question, with regard to which it can never be forgotten that we are those who set up the power of Turkey in 1854; that we are those who gave her the strength which has been exhibited in the Bulgarian massacres; that we are those who made the Treaty arrangements that have secured her for twenty years from almost a single hour of uneasiness brought about by foreign intervention; and that therefore nothing can be greater and deeper than our responsibility in the matter. It is incumbent upon us, one and all, that we do not allow any consideration, either of party or personal convenience, to prevent us from endeavouring to discharge this great duty . . . and that every Englishman should strive to the utmost of his might to secure that justice shall be done."

MR. GLADSTONE (1877).

"A guarantee of the integrity of the Ottoman dominions, if the inclination and policy of the Powers of Christendom permitted them to enter into such an engagement, might preserve this Empire from hostile attack, but it could offer no real security against the causes of internal dissolution. . . . The principle of the arrangement which we ought now to desire to see accomplished is that which should most effectually secure the tranquillity of the Levant during the remaining existence of the Turkish Government, and which, at the period of its dissolution, should offer in the Greek State a substitute whose interests we should naturally be called on to support in preference to the pretensions of all others."

LORD ABERDEEN (1829).

THE EASTERN CRISIS AND BRITISH POLICY.

"THE ASSASSIN" AND HIS FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

AN EVIL HERITAGE.

Canning and Greek Independence.—King Leopold and Crete.—"No More Mazzinis!"—The Crimean War.—Results of the Paris Treaty.—"Dizzy."—The Berlin Treaty and the Cyprus Convention.—The Sanctity of Treaties.

LET us suppose each his favourite statesman to be called this evening to the Foreign Office. What is the situation with which he would have to deal, so far as regards this unending Eastern Question? What is the inheritance of British policy in relation to the Porte and its subjects upon which he enters? What accomplished facts, what

hostile and favourable forces, what factors of tradition and personality, must he count upon in his effort to use England's power in furtherance not only of her own "material interests" but also in the larger cause of humanity, liberty, and progress?

It is a gloomy and unwholesome story, for the most part, that of British relations with the near East during this boastful and self-satisfied nineteenth century. In the early years of exhaustion after the Napoleonic wars there was a defence of *laisser faire* in foreign policy which hardly stands in these latter days of bloated armaments and rolling wealth, when the general cry of triumphant Jingoism is—

> "We've got the ships, we've got the men,
> we've got the money too!"

But the autocrats and aristocrats who shared Europe among themselves when the terrible man had been safely disposed of at St. Helena asked no excuse. *L'enfant prodigue*,

Democracy, now a youth of premature grey hairs and abundant "wild oats," was still unborn. Metternich called the tune for Europe, the old yet ever fresh tune of "integrity" and the *status quo* for all the Empires, the Turkish included; and Castlereagh was not behind in the dancing—until the blaze in Greece proclaimed in 1822 that the era of "untoward events" under the flag of Country and Liberty was not yet closed; that, indeed, it was only just opening. Canning changed the current of events for the time being, as a fearless, honest man can change a situation hitherto ruled by the slave-statesmen of autocracy, and brought to the aid of the wearied Greeks something more valuable than the dying flame of a poet's passion. Russia, as usual, was anxious to be first with its patronage; and it is interesting to recall that the scheme which it proposed in 1824 would actually have given Greece both Crete and Epirus. For other reasons it did not suit

the Greeks, who also had good ground for suspecting Russian kindness; and Canning promised that England would not support any plan for disposing of them without their own consent. The Court of Russia, safe after the alarming episode of the Decembrist revolt, was more and more devoted to the autocracy which her great martinet, Nicholas, exemplified so well; and France was also hostile to the Greeks. What would have happened then had England been bound to the unanimity of the Great Powers? Canning was not the man to ask the Emperors to tie his hands and then to give him marching orders. In spite of the open disgust and the secret machinations of Austria, he prevailed; and by the Anglo-Russian protocol of 1826, to which France adhered in the following year, the traditions of the Holy Alliance were thrown to the winds, and (except that Greece remained a tributary state) the "bag and baggage policy" was applied to the Turks in a very

literal sense. Canning's death a year later ends this brief but brilliant episode in British statescraft.

Alarmed at having accidentally done the right thing, and done it thoroughly, at Navarino, the English Government decided to show its penitence in a period of inaction. Russia was left to fight the Turk alone, and to win a large extension of territory in Asia, and of influence in the Danubian Principalities. This was, for England, the straight road to the revival of the old jealousies. Greece was one sufferer. However, the wheels of progress do not stop because Britain sulks; and Greece, by aiding Russia, obtained independence within her restricted territory, on condition of taking a royal family with it. Crete fought and bled to no such good purpose. She had been the first to join in the Greek struggle. In 1824–25 the island had been the base for the Turko-Egyptian operations, for that campaign of extermina-

tion which was to found for Ibrahim "upon the ashes of Greece a new barbaric state, composed of African negroes and fellaheen." Who could dream that after seventy long years Greece would have to suffer for her Cretan kindred what they had had to suffer for her—bloody defeat and bitter humiliation? Divided and conquered, the Greeks could give no effective answer to the Cretan appeal, and the island was seized, its towns reduced, and its inhabitants butchered with impunity. No Concert of Europe can efface memories like these. When Greek independence was at last won, the omission of Crete from the scheme not only gave King Leopold one of his chief reasons for renouncing the Crown in 1830, it also meant, as Palmerston and other English statesmen pointed out, that thenceforth Greece, bankrupt as she was, must maintain a navy to protect her south coast from Turkish attack. Needless to say, the critics of Greek naval extravagance in later

years have usually forgotten to mention this excuse and to blame the authors of the original wrong. However, the little kingdom struggled on, even under Otho and his crowd of Bavarians. In 1864 Great Britain transferred to it the Ionian Islands; and when Thessaly was added the dream of a still greater Greece revived, and the nation was easily beguiled into schemes of expenditure which, unsound and foolish as they certainly were, are hardly to be condemned by the vulgar missionaries of the latest British Imperialism.

After the realisation of Russia's designs, as exhibited in the Hunkiar Skelessi Treaty (1833), the jealous vigilance of the other Powers became a leading factor in European policy. Nicholas, dreaming perhaps of a vast partition in West and East, proposed a Russo-English *entente*, but the suggestion was politely shelved. For some time after 1848 the maintenance of autocracy against radicalism in Europe was a more important matter

to Russia than mere land-grabbing. Then came the crisis of 1850–52, arising out of the pettifogging dispute between Greek and Latin monks about the "Holy Places." Nicholas angled again for an English alliance. At the same time, he announced that while he would not himself hold Constantinople permanently if he were forced to occupy it at all, "he would not permit any other Power to establish itself at the Bosphorus; neither would he permit the Ottoman Empire to be broken up into republics to afford a refuge to the Mazzinis and Kossuths of Europe." There spoke the true Autocrat of Muscovy, as spoke Lobanoff in the summer of 1895. England refused the proffered "deal." Lord Stratford's despair of Turkish reform, for which he had wasted ten years of hard work and unique abilities, did not prevent him from leading the Sultan into war with Russia; and, by steps we cannot stay to retrace, forces within and behind the divided Aber-

deen Cabinet led Great Britain (against the better instincts of the Queen and Prince Consort, be it said) into the arms of Napoleon and the ditches of the Crimea. No doubt there was then much less to choose between Russia and Turkey than there is now; and if the emancipation of the Balkan races was delayed, it was perhaps only more certainly assured by the temporary repulse of Russian influences. But palliate it as we may, the Crimean War remains an infamy whose crop of disaster and shame is not yet exhausted. Sir Arthur Gordon records * that Lord Aberdeen, in the last years of his life, refused to rebuild the parish church of Methlick, and that no one suspected the reason till after his death, when there was found among his papers several scribbled copies of the following lines from the First Book of Chronicles: "The word of the Lord came to me saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast

* "Life of Lord Aberdeen," pp. 302, 303.

made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My Name because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight." Lord Stratford was troubled with no such dreadful compunction; and though he wrote a tract with the suggestive title, "Why am I a Christian?" this had no pertinence to his responsibility for the Crimean War.

The worst of the more than immediate results was the recognition of Turkey as in the comity of nations, and the consequent establishment of the principle of non-intervention * to which Lord Derby kept us bound

* Lord Salisbury's repeated references to the Treaty of March 30th, 1856, as the basis of the present enlarged Concert of Europe (see his speech on May 7th, 1897, for instance), gives fresh interest to this hoary instrument. In speaking against the continued British occupation of Egypt, on April 2nd, 1896, M. Bourgeois, the then French Premier, referred to the Treaty as *introducing* the principle of intervention in Turkish affairs. M. Bourgeois troubled himself about words and appearances; we are dealing with facts. There had always been intervention. The Paris Treaty sought to limit it to a self-constituted Concert, to the exclusion of single Powers having more immediate interests and duties; and even in the case of such a Concert the intervention was distinctly subjected to the principle of the "independence and integrity" of the Ottoman Empire. Its failure as an instrument of reform was pro-

even when all hopes of Turkish reform had been abandoned. England's insane refusal to accede to Napoleon's proposal for the union of the two Roumanias mattered less; but it served to alienate us from the peoples affected. They won their complete union in spite of us in 1862. Bosnia had revolted in the previous year; Servia followed in the next; and in 1864 Crete rose, and would have obtained freedom and union with Greece had anything of Canning's spirit lived in England's rulers. Seven years later Bismarck helped Russia to secure the removal from the

---

claimed by Austria thirty years ago; its failure as a security for peace is sufficiently testified by the later wars and by the colossal armaments which to-day cripple the European peoples. If the term "international law" were anything more than a polite fiction, to be regarded or ignored just as the ruling force at the time being might decide, there would have been since 1856 nothing more than platonic notes of advice to the Sultan. That there have been successive breaches of Ottoman "integrity" is happily true—in spite of, not because of, the Concert and its precious "principle." The outstanding result of the Treaty has been the creation of an infamous system of patronage at Constantinople, and a coalition of crowned heads which is the most serious bar in the way of liberty and progress revealed in modern history.

Treaty of Paris of that manifestly unjust provision by which we had sought to permanently exclude her from the Black Sea. Our pro-Turkish policy was a wreck; not a rag of apparent success remained to cover its moral nakedness.

Twenty years of disorder and failure in South-Eastern Europe did not serve to turn British statesmen into a more reasonable way; indeed, their next achievements were to be the worst of all. What has happened in Crete during the last two years is what happened in Bosnia and the Herzegovina twenty years earlier. The Porte gave lip-acceptance to certain reform proposals; but the insurgents refused to give in till the Powers guaranteed their fulfilment. On the other hand, the mere threat or semblance of concession aroused Mohammedan fanaticism. This time the Turks made the mistake of murdering European Consuls instead of helpless peasants, and the three Emperors (in league from 1872 to 1877)

easily agreed on the coercion which in a later day they will not hear of. France and Italy supported them. England had signed the Andrassy Note with reluctance, and refused altogether to sign the Berlin Memorandum. A succession of tragic events—the murder of the Sultan Abdul Aziz, the Bulgarian massacres, and the Servian and Montenegrin revolts—began to stir the English democracy, and threatened fatal inroads upon the tradition of Turkish partisanship. But Disraeli, safe for the time with a two-years-old majority, had reserves behind him unknown to his predecessors in Whitehall. He appealed to the music-halls. The success of his programme, with its grand ballet at Delhi, its lime-light promenade of the Russian spectre on the walls of Constantinople, its brilliant displays of verbal gymnastics, its frank appeals to surface sentiment, and all the other features of that blend of romance and realism whose home is the Empire (the lesser one, in Leicester

Square) and the Alhambra — this success remains one of the most astonishing chapters in political annals. The great Jew was superior to small scruples; he was also superior to the conventions of English Toryism. He whipped his squires and aristocrats to heel (they dote upon him to this day!), gave his Queen a new crown in famine-stricken India, bought the Khedive's Suez Canal shares, and capped the wondrous fabric with a bold re-proclamation of the discredited Castlereagh doctrine of the maintenance of the Sultan. The Sick Man was not too sick to rise to this plain opportunity. Not only did he throw himself with spirit into the Russian war, but (after the farcical episode of the still-born Turkish Parliament) he appealed triumphantly to the Treaty of 1856, and refused foreign control over the application of reforms, and even the weaker provisions of the London Protocol of May 31st, 1877. In nine months the Russians stood in Adrianople. A multi-

tude of simple Englishmen, to whom Muscovite expansion in Asia had been luridly pictured as so many steps nearer India, and who refused to believe any Russian on the subject of Constantinople, gladly heard that our fleet had sailed for Besika Bay and then for the Dardanelles. Britain was again, as Mr. Gladstone put it,* "on the edge of a giddy precipice of guilt and shame." Mr. Greenwood has lately told us that Lord Beaconsfield positively desired war. The influence of Lord Carnarvon, and, in a smaller degree, of Lord Derby, backed on the one hand by the rising popular protest, and on the other by the patience of Russian diplomacy, happily prevailed. The world has heard little of Count Schouvaloff in these later years, but he deserves a niche in English memories for his steady endeavours to stave off the calamity toward which a Jingo Government was hurrying us.

* In one of the noblest of political brochures, "The Paths of Honour and of Shame." It is as interesting to-day as when it came from the press in March 1878.

It is at this point that Lord Salisbury appears in the front rank of political actors. A good second to his master, Beaconsfield, in his hostility to the Russo-Turkish Treaty of San Stefano, he stepped into Lord Derby's shoes as Foreign Secretary, and shared the Premier's theatrical excursion to Berlin and the hospitality of Prince Bismarck. The mission looked a fair and open one. It presently appeared, however, that while Mr. Gladstone, in his magnificent way, was recalling Bishop Butler on madness in nations, these two chiefs of the war party were carrying to the sham Congress, which some people have affected to regard as the forerunner of a European Parliament, a secret understanding with Russia in one pocket, and in the other a much more vital instrument, the Treaty generally known as the Cyprus Convention. By the latter Great Britain overrode all former engagements by giving an individual guarantee for the integrity of Ottoman

territory. "In return," the Sultan "promises *to England* to introduce necessary reforms, *to be agreed upon later between the two Powers*, into the government for the protection of the Christian and other subjects of the Porte in these territories; and *in order to enable England to make necessary provision* for executing *her* engagements, H.I.M. the Sultan further consents to assign the Island of Cyprus to be occupied and administered by England."

Lord Salisbury has said a good deal lately about the sanctity of treaties. "The principle of acting upon the treaties to which you have deliberately acceded is a sacred principle," he says; "it lies at the base of the civilisation of the world. . . . To maintain that because of the action of one particular holder of power you have a right to scatter your obligations to the winds is to undermine the security on which all your international relations repose."†

---

* First Article. Blue Book No. 36, 1878.

† Speech to Primrose League, May 6th, 1897.

That sounds positive enough; but what about the Cyprus Convention? If it is not tacitly abrogated why has nothing been done under it; why is Lord Salisbury first and foremost among European statesmen to disclaim and denounce the individual action required by individual responsibility? If, on the other hand, the Convention is, as Madame Novikoff says, "all wrong, illegal, and from the point of view of international law null and void,"* why is it not formally denounced, and why do we continue to hold Cyprus? Before he poses again as the apostle of treaty obligations Lord Salisbury should really enlighten a puzzled world on what looks like a very awkward dilemma.

The other great relic of 1878 is the Treaty of Berlin, which gave complete independence to Servia, Montenegro, and Roumania,

* In the same letter (*Observer*, October 18th, 1896), "O. K." suggests the surrender of Cyprus to Greece. She could hardly foresee that Russia and Germany would force Greece into war with Turkey rather than give her Crete—let alone Cyprus!

divided an autonomous Bulgaria north of the Balkans from a partially independent East Roumelia, and entrusted Bosnia and the Herzegovina to Austrian administration. Russia recovered Bessarabia, and obtained a considerable territory in Asia Minor and an indemnity. The Porte again undertook to apply reforms under European superintendence "without delay." The Macedonian question was left unsolved, and it remains to-day the chief bar to amity, and so to progress, among the Balkan States. The Congress was what the vulgar call "a put-up job." The only "Peace with Honour" it secured has its bloody memorial all over the Balkans, in desolated Armenia, and lastly, in Crete and Thessaly—wherever individuals and races have preferred death to longer slavery. How Bulgaria won her union, and how, despite Russian conspiracies, the principality has steadily developed her resources and consolidated her power, need not now concern

us. For Greece the intervening time has gone less satisfactorily, just because it seemed less dangerous to the Great Powers to neglect her claims, and because—Austria being jealous and fearful, Russia hostile, and England, for the most part, indifferent—no Power had any inclination to espouse her cause. Having been allowed, as a tardy favour, to plead her cause at the Congress, as a sort of poor relation, she received the virtual promise of Thessaly and Epirus. Three years later a portion of the boon was extorted from Turkey. If Greece had had, even in 1897, the frontier marked out for her some many years before at Berlin, the course of the war might have been very different. Crete, after five revolutions in as many decades,* was the subject of another hollow concession. The Organic Statute won by the insurrection of 1866–69 was now at last to be put fully in force, with certain modifications agreed upon at Halepa

* *Vide* M. Gennadius, *Times*, February 15th, 1897, etc.

between the delegates of the Porte and the Cretan Assembly. As year after year passed without any effective reform, King George, pressed by the unanimous sentiment of his people, appealed to the Powers and warned them, equally in vain, and maintained a patient, perhaps a too patient, attitude with increasing difficulty. Civil governors set between the military representatives of the Porte and a discontented people were powerless for good. The growth of disorder was met, as usual, by rigorous repression, and, in 1889, by the partial abrogation of the constitution. Notwithstanding the restraining influence of Athens, to which our Consuls and Ambassadors have repeatedly testified, civil strife became chronic, and gradually culminated in the crisis which must be described on a later page.

II.

"These times are grave for liberty. We live in the nineteenth century; we talk of progress; we believe that we are advancing. But can any man of observation who has watched the events of the last few years in Europe have failed to perceive that there is a movement indeed, but a downward and backward movement? There are a few spots in which institutions that claim our sympathy still exist and flourish. They are secondary places—nay, they are almost the holes and corners of Europe, so far as mere material greatness is concerned, although their moral greatness will, I trust, ensure them long prosperity and happiness. But in these times more than ever does responsibility centre upon the institutions of England; and if so, then I say that a measure which attempts to establish a moral complicity between us and those who seek safety in repressive measures will be a blow and a discouragement to the sacred cause of freedom in every country in the world."

MR. GLADSTONE (1857).

CHAPTER II.

THE "SICK MAN" BECOMES "THE ASSASSIN."

The Massacres already proved.—A Type: Moussa Bey.—Extermination as a Policy.—Proximate Responsibility: Changed Opinion about the Sultan.—Ultimate Responsibility: English Apathy; Russian Conspiracies in the Balkans; A New Move.

THE period since the Berlin Treaty is marked by three main features. The first is the singularly perverted development of the protected Turkish Sultanate, in which the climax of moral degeneracy is marked by a revival of military ascendency, and the policy of massacre is the condition precedent to the conquest of heroic Greece. The second is the orientation of Russia—her fall from the position of the never quite unselfish, but certainly effective, friend of the subject peoples to that of the Sultan's chief patron. The third is the surrender of England to the self-

styled Concert of Europe, and the surrender of the Concert to the three Emperors.

It is impossible in this short sketch to trace all the stages of the decay of Turkey as a "great," not to say a civilised, Power; and the writer has neither the space nor the knowledge adequate to an exposition of those facts of Ottoman character by which light may some day be thrown upon many recent events. Englishmen have stood of late in a humiliating position between two kinds of danger—that of easy scepticism on the one hand, and of no less easy credulity on the other; the danger of excitement and that of apathy; the danger that lurks in every crusade, and that of mere blindness to the supreme importance of the religious factor in Eastern affairs. In this quandary—frightened, moreover, by facile polychrome forecasts of a European war, and lacking the prophetic summons with which Mr. Gladstone raised the country in 1880—many good people

have paid their mite of conscience-money to Armenian and Greek relief funds, and then turned aside to domestic duties in which they saw their way more clearly. So far as the wrongs of Armenia are concerned, there is more available and well-verified information in print than any but a few students are ever likely to digest. Added to the voluminous British and French Blue Books, the works of eyewitnesses like the Rev. Edwin Bliss,* Mr. and Mrs. Rendel Harris,† of Continental observers like Dr. Lepsius of Berlin, and of M. Victor Bérard‡—to say nothing of the more general accounts of Turkish misrule of Mr. Richard Davey,§ and other travellers, and the ephemeral publications of the Armenian Committees—constitute a mass of indubitable fact before which

---

* "Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities."

† "Letters from the Scenes of the recent Massacres in Armenia."

‡ "La Politique du Sultan."

§ "The Sultan and his Subjects."

ignorance or indifference are inexcusable. But in all this cloud of horrible detail it has been almost impossible to preserve historical perspective, the sense of relative importance, the connection between event and cause, and between primary and secondary causes. On the merits of the Sultan and the Palace *régime* it may be almost said that all decent Englishmen are agreed, and on the Continent there has been a rapid development of opinion toward the British position. In July 1878 Lord Beaconsfield gave Abdul Hamid the following, to our eyes, extraordinary testimonial: "He is a man whose every impulse is good. However great may be the difficulties he has to encounter, however various may be the impulses that may ultimately control him, his impulses are always good. He is not a tyrant, he is not dissolute. He is not a bigot. He is not corrupt." Up to the winter of 1894 this verdict may be said to have held its ground, though with ever-

diminishing force. There is probably not a single statesman in Europe to-day who would not repudiate these words, or any of a like tenour. The old favourable view could not be maintained in face of the conjunction of the massacres with the concentration of all authority at the Palace. Of course, this revival of the Turk in his worst *rôle* is not an ultimate fact. Evidently it could not have occurred without some sanction, even some stimulus, beyond any merely personal possession either in the Sultan or his tools. The ultimate responsibility for the destruction of Armenia and the constant attempts to destroy other subject peoples lies elsewhere. Some light will be thrown on that vital point presently; but it may be many years ere, if ever, it is completely dispelled. In the meantime, the course of events affords the best guidance for the future policy of the Western democracies; and we, therefore, resume our effort to get a bird's-eye view,

not of the consequences of Turkish rule—of which, as we have said, there is evidence enough in circulation—but of the attitude of Europe toward this problem.

For some years after the Russo-Turkish War there was comparative order in the Christian provinces of Turkey and comparative prosperity in Armenia. Murad Bey has explained * how at the beginning of the reign Abdul Hamid gave the *mot d'ordre* for the accumulation of wealth at Yildiz Kiosk, and how "all the interests of the Empire, the army, and the administration were subjected to the craving for gold at the palace." He casually mentions that "fabulous sums of money found their way abroad to purchase the public opinion of Europe." But, so far as life was concerned, it was needful to wait to see how the cat would jump. Also there is a Kurdish proverb which advises the farmer to stay his shears till the fleece has

* The *Times*, October 13th, 1896.

grown again. The fleece was not allowed to grow very long in Armenia or Crete—to say nothing of Macedonia, of which the records are scanty—and during the later eighties rapine and oppression became more and more frequent. The typical case of Moussa Bey alone forms the body of several British Blue Books. Moussa, a Kurdish robber-chieftain before the war, whose deeds had caused terror far beyond their actual scene, came, at the beginning of the campaign, red-handed as it were, to the Turkish authorities, and offered his services in return for a free pardon. He was received somewhat apologetically by Mouktar Pasha, and with his Circassian and Kurdish mounted irregulars formed an important adjunct to the Ottoman forces. After the war Moussa appears as the absolute ruler of five or six large villages in Kurdistan, doing very much as he likes, with a thousand men under him. In 1883 he wounded two American missionaries. In 1889 it was

reported that he "had been imprisoned on a charge of oppressing the Armenians, but had managed to escape, and in revenge had collected his Kurdish followers and fallen upon the Armenian villagers, plundering houses, violating girls, and torturing and murdering the population, some of whom he had burned alive after pouring petroleum over them.* In despatch after despatch Vice-Consul Davey reported the unspeakable deeds of this ruffian. Time passed slowly; and even Sir William White, the strongest British representative at the Porte since Stratford, was in despair. At last, in reply to Lord Salisbury's urgent demands, Moussa was arrested. He was then promptly allowed to escape. In Bitlis he was honourably received by the authorities. On fresh pressure he was again arrested, submitted to a mock trial, and "banished." This is one case out of many. Similar are the records

* Blue Book, Turkey, No. 1, 1890-91.

of Hussein Agha, the Munir of Patmos, who, after indescribable exploits of murder, theft, and rape, and notwithstanding the denunciation of Lord Salisbury, was honourably received by the Sultan and promoted to a higher military command; of Hosnef Pasha, the Circassian ex-brigand, who created the disturbances in Marsovan in 1893, and who was then promoted to Adana; of Memduh Bey, a convicted criminal who was made Vali of Angora; and of many another. It is little to be wondered at that some of the more spirited Armenians were driven to the *dernier ressort* of forming revolutionary committees. The Armenian revolutionists have never been more than a handful of desperate patriots; and—partly for this reason, partly because their countrymen were nearly everywhere in a minority, partly because of geographical circumstances which distinguish what is called Armenia from Crete, for instance—they have never been able to make

a successful and effective stand against their oppressors, except on the occasion of the brave defence of Zeitun. The Armenians are not a fighting race, and the Sultan's constant complaints on this score are notoriously and contemptibly mendacious.

In September 1891 Abdul Hamid suddenly dismissed a Ministry of six years' standing, and started afresh on openly anti-Christian lines. It began to be evident that the Sick Man was less sick than had been supposed. He soon gave signs, indeed, of startling energy. Laws were made in regard to Christian schools and churches flagrantly ignoring the Capitulations and the Treaty of Berlin. In Crete, where trouble was now chronic, the appointment of Mahmoud Djellalladin as Vali added fuel to the fire. The differences between the Armenian Patriarch and the Porte had reached an acute phase; and the lawless Kurds had been formed into a cavalry force 30,000 strong, named after

the Sublime One himself, Hamidieh. France and Russia were too busy fostering prejudice against England (the Khedive's death had increased the handicap we suffer by our occupation of Egypt) to be anxious to join in enforcing the ancient obligations of the Sultan. So things were allowed to go from bad to worse. Through 1891 and 1892 the centres of anxiety were chiefly in the Balkan States, where Russian intrigue had found a happy hunting ground. It was in the first days of 1893 that Armenia sprang again into tragic prominence. On January 5th Central Asia Minor was posted with revolutionary placards. With significant promptitude a reign of terror was inaugurated by the Government. Thousands of Armenians were promiscuously arrested and thrown into loathsome provincial prisons, while even American missionaries were mobbed, and their stations burned down. At first it was believed that a genuine conspiracy of disaffected Armenians

and Turks had been discovered. But evidence gradually accumulated which showed that the whole affair had been got up by official *agents provocateurs*, that the supposed sedition was, in fact, as a responsible observer described it, "a devilish plot to open the way for the massacre and plunder of the Armenians."*

Then, very slowly—for the Porte did its best to cut off all communications—the news leaked through of the torture of the prisoners, absolutely innocent people, for the most part.

* The Constantinople Correspondent of *The Speaker*, a gentleman of altogether exceptional information and standing. The following passage is from his letter of April 15th, 1893: "The question of the torture of the Armenian prisoners naturally excites more attention in Europe than it does here, where every one knows that in such cases it is the rule rather than the exception. Even Midhat Pacha, the special friend of Sir Henry Elliott, used it constantly and in horrible forms. There was no secret made of the cages which he used for this purpose at Rustchuk, in which the victim was surrounded by knives in such a way that he could neither stand erect, nor sit, nor lie down. It did not take many hours of this torture to drive a man mad. The latest form of torture that I have known of as applied to these Armenian prisoners is a curious one. The man's temple is struck with a hammer. The blows are not violent, but regular, rapid, and repeated until the victim loses consciousness or in madness confesses anything that is desired."

The old-fashioned protests were lodged at the Porte by the Ambassadors, who also sent representatives to make inquiries on the spot. Eight hundred Armenians were reported to be awaiting trial at Angora alone, and many more had died on their way in chains across the country. Yet the Turkish Government denied that there had been any disturbances. Weeks and months passed, and brought England and the other Powers full warning that the Ottoman officials were driving peaceful subjects to desperation on the one hand, while on the other they excited the fanaticism of the Moslem majorities.

Angora is within easy reach of Constantinople, and representatives of the Powers were able to be present at the trial. When it became known that seventeen probably innocent men had been condemned to death, and many others to long imprisonment, a demand for active intervention arose in this country; and this was much stimulated when the inter-

national agents at the trial reported that it had been a mere farce, a travesty of judicial forms, both prisoners and witnesses having been subjected to infamous torture. Ultimately the liberation of nearly all the supposed conspirators was secured; but for the greater part of this carnival of cruelty there was and could be no reparation. For a few months there was comparative peace. The fleece was being allowed to grow again. Then the officials of the Angora district resumed their efforts to force the Armenians into rebellion. In December 1893 a disturbance in the city of Yozgat was made the excuse for further draconic measures, including wholesale arrests, and a month later a Mohammedan riot led to the murder of sixty or more Christians in cold blood. All business was stopped; no one's life was safe; ruin stared these wretched people in the face. Sir Philip Currie, who had come to the Bosphorus in succession to Sir Clare Ford, did what he

could, but that was very little, to rectify individual abuses and relieve distress. Again the Assassin rested from his labours.

We may take this point as being the end of the preparatory period in the policy of massacre, and may momentarily glance aside at the course of events in other parts of South-Eastern Europe. The history of the Balkan peoples during the preceding decade was in the main the history of the tightening grip of official and unofficial Russia, the ceaseless underground struggle to make Slavic influences predominant. The object of these plans cannot, it must be confessed, be very precisely defined; the general fact is, however, beyond doubt. In 1885 Austria and Germany had the advantage — or, at least, Roumania and Bulgaria loved Russia less, if they did not love the Hapsburgs more. This was also true of Greece under M. Tricoupis, and Servia under King Milan. By 1890 Russian agencies were able to boast

of the upset of the Tricoupis Cabinet and of the Servian "Progressists," followed by the abdication of King Milan and by the culminating romance of the kidnapping and abdication of Prince Alexander of Bulgaria —Alexander who, as the *Spectator* said, might have lived to be Emperor of Constantinople but for the moment of weakness in which he resigned his crown to the Tsar; Alexander who, according to another Liberal writer, would have been "in coming centuries the Prince Arthur of Bulgarian legend and song." Lord Salisbury had been only a fortnight in power when the Prince was seized by a band of military ruffians in Sofia in August 1886; but there was plenty of time for English intervention between this date and that of the telegram from the Tsar which caused the unhappy and desperate Prince to abandon the struggle. It has been positively stated that he would have refused to abdicate save for one unexpected event—that Lord

Salisbury supported Bismarck in advising him to do so. One more entry in that terrible black-book of our lost opportunities! It was one of various illustrations of the fact that the transition from a Beaconsfield to a Salisbury has had disadvantages as well as advantages, especially in circumstances requiring courage and decision. Fortunately for Bulgaria, Alexander left a stronger man behind him; and if ever it be pardonable to "fight the devil with his own weapons," Stambuloff is pardoned. Europe left him no hope but that of a friendly policy toward the Porte. Russia pursued him relentlessly, assured now of the indifference of Tory England, and apparently also of Austria, which was seeking a *rapprochement*. General Kaulbars, the Tsar's envoy, having got his deserts, was followed up by the Zankoff-Nabokoff and Panitza plots. In April 1891 another gang of assassins, bent on killing the Bulgarian Premier, struck down in mistake the able

and honest Minister Beltcheff. Early in the following summer M. Tricoupis made his abortive tour of reconciliation through the Balkans; and it is worth recalling the words of the Servian Minister, M. Mijatovich, that "if a Balkan Confederation ever becomes a reality it will be due to Greek statesmen, and its history will commence from the day on which M. Tricoupis left Athens for Belgrade and Sofia." There was now a fevered interval of acute hostility between the Powers of the Triple and Dual Alliances, and many prophecies, good and evil, which have come to nothing, were launched. Among the gloomier things confidently anticipated, especially after the Cronstadt fêtes, the Russian application for the opening of the Dardanelles, and, later on, Bismarck's cynical invitation, was a Russian occupation of Constantinople. King Alexander went to Moscow, and Servia, at least, was plainly willing to prostrate herself before the Tsar. On the other hand, Lord

Salisbury helped to intensify the jealousy which is the curse of the Balkan races by praising Bulgaria warmly in a Mansion House speech. Stambuloff's success at the Porte in getting four Bulgarian bishoprics established in Macedonia contributed to the same end. Mr. Gladstone again appeared in his favourite *rôle* of the true Unionist in a letter discountenancing Particularism among these "subjected and lately subjected peoples." So far as Servia is concerned, we need only recall in this hurried review the *coup d'état* of February, 1893, when the boy-King arrested the Regents, and, fifteen months later, his abrogation of his father's liberal constitution in favour of that of 1869. In Bulgaria the priestly wrangling over the body and soul of baby Boris, and the victory of the Orthodox Greek Church, led at once to the recognition of Prince Ferdinand, and also to the quarrels which ended, in May 1894, in the fall of Stambuloff, who in the following year was foully

assassinated in the streets of Sofia. He had ruled Bulgaria with Bismarckian rigour; but probably nothing less could have saved it, and this last sacrifice for the country he had so bravely served wiped out the memory of many faults.

Even at this early stage in the awakening of the peoples of Europe to the nature of the problem of the Near East, we have reached a position in which strong and enlightened statesmanship might have found one of the great critical opportunities which history saves up for its favourites. Whether by reason of the check her endeavours had received on the western side, or for other reasons, Russia had now developed a new line of influence. Aided by the subservience of her French ally, she was constituting herself the special patron of the Sultan. But the die was not perhaps finally cast. Who knows what a younger Gladstone or even a Beaconsfield might not have done at

such a juncture? For the rest, the old forms remain. Abdul Hamid is outwardly honoured as one among other friendly Sovereigns; the Queen addresses him as such; the British Ambassador, at whatever cost to his private feelings, regards every established form of diplomatic and courtly ceremonial; the British branch of the Turkish Post Office obeys the decrees of the censorship with wonderful patience; British Bluejackets line the yards on the occasion of the Imperial birthday; British soldiers submit themselves to the critical eye of Turkish Governors whom they are protecting from the wrath of a revolted people. But though the sentence is lacking the verdict of Europe is given. The "Sick Man" has become "the Assassin," not merely in the phrase of poets and apostles of the power that is above all Powers, but in the tacit understanding of the whole political world. The central fact of the

European situation lay still, however, a step in advance of this admission. The Turk was always an assassin on a small and often on a large scale. Whatever divergence of view there may be in regard to the character of the common Turk, testimony is general on two points: his indolence, his ignorance, his fatalism, alone constitute in times of comparative peace and order an almost insuperable block against reform; in time of disturbance or war his religious fanaticism disperses every ordinary scruple, and makes the most frightful deeds not only possible but admirable to him. Mr. Rendel Harris gives a number of cases of brave and humane action by Turks in Armenia. These are the rare exceptions amid a spectacle of diabolical ferocity or brute indifference unequalled in modern history. The utter failure of the so-called Young Turkey movement—if, indeed, there ever was anything worth calling a movement under that name—confirms

other evidence as to the psychology of the Ottoman rank and file. That the rank and file *can* be kept in order when the officials, big and little, wish it, is, however, sufficiently testified by the correspondents who entered Thessaly with the triumphant Turkish army. The indictment of the Blue Books is directed not, or not mainly, against these, but against the cult of official thieves and bullies—from the pettiest spy up to the master of Yildiz himself—who batten upon a land the moral degradation of which has not yet utterly destroyed its rich material resources. This indictment has been long gathering. It was sufficiently complete in 1860, when France and England intervened; in Bulgaria in 1875, too, it was shown that massacres had been directly ordered by the Porte, and Great Britain allowed the Sultan to promote his deputy-murderers. After twenty years the Concert has still not had enough of it. On the one hand, we have, therefore, a cult officially

adjudged to be a cult of assassination, which after this long tutelage continues to ignore the decrees of the tribunals which ostensibly check but really protect it, and to flourish in the elaboration of its tale of blood. On the other hand, we have six Powers, any one of which, separately, could have enforced the wish professed by them all, but all of which together constitute a simple conspiracy of perpetual procrastination. The Invalid with one guardian has become the Assassin with six. That is the extraordinary phenomenon which remains to be explained.

III.

"The idea of turning the Turks out of Europe and of re-establishing the worship of the true God in the Cathedral of St. Sophia is very beautiful, no doubt. . . . But what would Russia gain by it? She would certainly gain glory, but at the same time she would lose all the real advantages which are assured to her by having as neighbour a country weakened by a series of unfortunate wars and inevitable collisions with the chief European States. The principle on which our policy is based urges us to make every effort towards maintaining authority everywhere, wherever it exists, to strengthen it where it is weakened, and finally to defend it wherever it is attacked."

The RUSSIAN CHANCELLOR, COUNT NESSELRODE (1833).

"The only clear advice I have to give is that the unspeakable Turk should be immediately struck out of the question, and the country left, honest European guidance, delaying which can be profitable or agreeable only to gamblers on the Stock Exchange, but distressing and unprofitable to all other men."

CARLYLE (1877).

CHAPTER III.

A RUSSIAN PROTECTORATE.

Sassun: Mr. Shipley's Report.—The Mock Inquiry.—Russian Objection to the Reform Scheme.—Canon MacColl, Mr. Clayden, and Madame Novikoff.—Coercion proposed: The Russian Veto.—Results.

In November 1894 reliable news began to reach England of the Sassun atrocities. The most desperate efforts had been made to hide the truth, and the difficulties of communication in the winter time had made concealment temporarily possible. On December 4th the *Times* announced the receipt of "evidence of an entirely unimpeachable character." It was explained that the Armenians in this district of Kurdistan had been gradually reduced to a sort of feudal serfdom by the Kurds, who exacted a tribute that left no margin for the payment of Turkish taxes. A body of irregulars sent to levy

these taxes for the second or third time was resisted and repulsed by the now desperate Christian villagers. A large force of regular troops under Zekki Pasha, Mushir of Erzinghian, was then despatched. The Kurds left their tributaries to their fate; and "it is positively affirmed that the Mushir commanded the soldiery to punish the wretched villagers by entering upon a deliberate orgy of rape and murder. The Turkish soldiers seemed to have recoiled from these outrages; but the reluctant troops were overawed by the presence of others who were ordered to fire upon them as mutineers unless they obeyed the Pasha's command. They yielded, and the whole group of Christian villages was given over to horrible outrages, involving a deplorable loss of life. The Chief Civil Officer of the district, the Mutessarif, protested against the lawless cruelties ordered by the Mushir, but his remonstrances were treated with contempt, and he was ultimately

removed from his office. On the other hand, Zekki Pasha, the author of these atrocities, not only retains his military command, but has been rewarded with an Imperial decoration." According to the *Standard*, twenty-six villages had been destroyed; hundreds of girls and women had been outraged before being put to death; infants had been bayonetted at their mothers' breasts; and the massacre had given a new and horrible justification for the quarantine cordon drawn round the desolated district for fear of cholera.

Some insatiable person has coined the silly phrase "divine impatience." There is only one thing more extraordinary than the length of God's patience, and that is the shortness of man's memory. Leading newspapers and speakers, after the Sassun revelations, still professed to find "no reason to doubt the personal humanity of the Sultan." Mr. Gladstone—out of office for nine months,

but statesmanlike as ever—repeated his two working principles: trust in the Government as the proper "organ of the nation" so long as it could be trusted, and the need of an absolute verification of the facts. But, he added, and the words vibrate with the sense of horror that has since burnt itself deep into the hearts and brains of all humane people, "if allegations such as these are established, it will stand as if it were written with letters of iron on the records of the world that such a Government as that which can countenance and cover the perpetration of such outrages is a disgrace, in the first place, to Mahomet, the Prophet whom it professes to follow, that it is a disgrace to civilisation at large, and that it is a curse to mankind." Well, the general accuracy of the allegations was established by the reports of the British, Austrian, Russian, and Italian Agents. Here is the conclusion of Mr. Shipley's studiously moderate despatch:—

"Although, as I have endeavoured to show, the Turkish soldiers cannot be convicted of the sensationally exaggerated stories of massacres attributed to them in certain of the English newspapers, I do not think—seeing as I did, in company with my colleagues, the entire ruin of a whole district, not a house being left standing, the fields even having been wantonly devastated, as well as the abject misery and destitution to which these Armenians have been reduced—that the epithets applied to the conduct of the Turkish soldiers and Kurds by the same Press are in any way too strong. We have in our report given it as our conviction, arrived at from the evidence brought before us, that the Armenians were massacred without distinction of age or sex, and, indeed, for a period of some three weeks, viz., from August 12th to September 4th (o.s.), it is not too much to say that the Armenians were absolutely hunted like wild beasts, being killed wherever they were met; and if the slaughter was not greater it was, I believe, solely owing to the vastness of the mountain ranges of that district, which enabled the people to scatter, and so facilitated their escape. In fact, and speaking with a full sense of responsibility, I am compelled to say that the conviction has forced itself on me that it was not so much the capture of the agitator Mourad or the suppression of a pseudo-revolt which was desired by the Turkish authorities, as the extermination, pure and simple, of the Ghelié-Guzan and Talori districts."

This was not thought sufficient evidence by the British Government, which even continued to withhold its consular reports from publication. The Sultan refused to allow Colonel Chermside to go to the spot to investigate, although he had charged a British Vice-

Consul with inciting the Armenians to revolt. Lord Rosebery bowed before the august will of the Assassin. A purely Turkish Commission was appointed to inquire into the statements of the Consuls and of independent European witnesses. In notifying the fact to his officials and representatives, the Sultan was careful to deny again the truth of the reports, and to declare that "the Commission is sent to inquire into the criminal conduct of Armenian brigands." Sir Philip Currie promptly wired information of this outrageous impertinence, and also of the decoration of two of the Turkish officers concerned in the massacres, and the dismissal of one who had protested against them (November 23rd, 1894). Lord Kimberley protested his "surprise and pain." Austria and Germany refused to participate in the inquiry. Italy withdrew when its true character became known, and her Consul-General carried out an independent investigation, which resulted in an estimate

that the appalling total of 50,000 lives had been lost. Still Great Britain bolstered up the official farce. The Russian, French, and British delegates at the "inquiry" were repeatedly insulted, and the Commission refused to call the witnesses they suggested.

Then the first of a series of elaborate reform schemes was drawn up by the Ambassadors, and presented to the Sultan on behalf of the three Governments, on May 11th, 1895. The scheme, which was politely shelved by Abdul Hamid, beside granting a liberal amnesty, would have subjected the appointment of Valis to the approval of the Powers, improved the judicial machinery, and set up a High Commissioner to apply reforms in the provinces, in co-operation with a half-Christian reform committee sitting in Constantinople. Prince Lobanoff objected to the plan, and objected in terms which go beyond any mere objection of detail, or any general doubt of its effectiveness. "He did not at present

see how it would be possible to introduce reforms which would satisfy the Armenians, unless we were prepared to undertake the reform of the administration of the whole of Turkey in Asia." On June 4th, he added that the Russian Government "would in no case associate themselves with measures of constraint against Turkey with regard to the question of Armenian reforms . . . in the event of the Sultan refusing to comply with our demands." With this temper prevalent at Petersburg the conclusion was foregone. Workable or unworkable, no one ever tried to work the scheme. Sir Philip Currie might as well have saved his paper; Great Britain might as well—might infinitely more profitably—have at once left a Concert which held nothing for her but defeat and humiliation. Lord Salisbury being now in power, and apparently in earnest, and the Constantinople committee having been changed for a provincial commission of surveillance, the

Russian Ambassador joined with the Ministers of England and France in presenting a Collective Note urging the acceptance of the reforms (August 21st). The reply of the Palace was the disorders of September 21st in Constantinople, followed rapidly by butcheries in Asia Minor which, as our Ambassador said, at "a moderate estimate,' disposed of 30,000 lives, and, in fact, "devastated, as far as the Armenians are concerned, the whole of the provinces to which the scheme of reforms was intended to apply."

We have now reached, and somewhat overpassed, the crucial point to which our review of the course of events has tended—the point at which Great Britain submitted to a Russian veto upon her proposal to coerce the Sultan. The most extraordinary diversity of view on this subject has been exhibited by English politicians usually in close agreement, with the unfortunate result that the old distinguishing lines of thought in our foreign

policy have been well-nigh obliterated, and, worse still, the plain facts have been obscured in a mist of partizan controversy. For instance, Canon MacColl * directs a strong indictment against Lord Rosebery and his Government, which, he contends, "mismanaged the question from the beginning" by their "invertebrate diplomacy;" and demands a free hand for Lord Salisbury. Lord Rosebery's Edinburgh speech, he thinks, "has done a most serious, perhaps a fatal, injury to the cause of the Armenians, and has already sent numbers of them to torture and death." On the other hand, Mr. P. W. Clayden, in launching the "Liberal Forward Movement,"† is quite kind toward the Liberal statesman, while he denounces Lord Salisbury as co-author with Lord Beaconsfield of the "moral spoliation" of Russia. By that "great act of double treachery," the Berlin

* "The Sultan and the Powers."

† "Armenia: the Case against Lord Salisbury."

Treaty, they "handed back to the Assassin the victims that Russia had delivered from his grasp"—the chief point in which they modified it being "just that which brings the responsibility for the massacres in Armenia upon Lord Salisbury's head." But Canon MacColl draws a glowing picture of the Prime Minister's sagacity before and after 1877 and during that crisis, and concludes that "Lord Salisbury is peculiarly well qualified at this moment to settle the Armenian question—qualified by his abilities, his comprehensive knowledge of the subject, his genuine sympathy with the Christian population of Turkey, and, not least, by his antecedents." It is almost enough to destroy one's faith in history and historians to see two writers of great experience and good equipment starting from the same political standpoint and arriving at such absolutely contradictory conclusions, not only as to matters of policy, but also in questions of fact. Neither the

personal nor the party questions at stake concern us here, although no sensible man can view without alarm the virtual extinction of British Liberalism, for the time being, as a force in European politics. Both writers omit one vital consideration—the one by reason of an old prepossession, the other probably because of the space-limitations of a small pamphlet—upon which it is our immediate business to centre attention. As to Lord Salisbury, Canon MacColl's ultra-favourable view is hardly tenable in face of the Premier's continued inability to extract any solid satisfaction from the "Concert of Europe." Every reader of his spirited pages must have felt even more strongly at the end than at the outset the painful force of this simple dilemma: if Lord Salisbury and the Russian Chancellor were both as honest and as sagacious as he suggests, *why was nothing done? Why is nothing done still?* But later events and a visit to Athens will probably

have brought Canon MacColl to a truer idea of Russian policy. As to Lord Rosebery, the Canon's attempt to explain away the perfectly plain Russian declarations, in order to discredit the then Liberal Ministry, is pushed to the point of disingenuousness. Lord Rosebery's position while in office (his later attitude is a very different matter) may be criticised as not having been sufficiently courageous, but this criticism cannot possibly be carried along Russophile * lines. It is a little difficult to see why English writers should waste time in this special pleading when even Madame Novikoff has admitted that the *rôle* of protecting "that mischievous force," the Sultan, has been transferred from Great Britain to Russia,† that the fact of

* It will be understood that the word is used in the strictly limited sense of friendliness toward the Russian *Government*. No one can feel a warmer appreciation than does the writer of the powers, actual and latent, of the Russian *people*, or a warmer detestation of the official class which exploits those powers for its own nefarious ends, to the general injury of mankind.

† *Observer*, October 18th, 1896.

a Russo-Turkish *rapprochement* "seems to be admitted,"* and that one of the most orthodox apostles of the autocracy may lament Prince Lobanoff's policy.† Canon MacColl gives no facts whatever to support his "belief" that it would have been "quite easy" to come to an understanding with Russia early in 1894. His pages are full of evidences precisely to the contrary effect; so that when he talks about the failure to achieve this impossibility as "vitiating all that followed," he does Lord Rosebery a distinct injustice.

We had better at once give Russian statesmen credit for knowing what they want, and being capable of saying it. Prince Lobanoff's words are the best authority for what Prince Lobanoff meant in the summer of 1895, and they are (so far as the Blue Books‡ reveal

* "Russia and England: Proposals for a New Departure," p. 32.

† *Ibid.*, p. 17.

‡ Turkey, No. 1, 1896.

them), quite unmistakeably plain. It was in the last days of May, 1895, that Sir Philip Currie was instructed to sound his colleagues at Constantinople as to whether their Governments would agree to the delivery of an ultimatum. The Russian Chancellor at once instructed M. de Nelidoff "that *in no case* would the Russian Government associate itself with such measures" (of constraint). On June 4th he spoke "very openly" on the subject to the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, saying that—

> "he had never looked upon the presentation of the scheme of reforms as an ultimatum to the Sultan, or considered that, in the event of the Sultan declining to accept it or making counter-proposals, the Ambassadors would be justified in using threatening language. *Russia would certainly not join in any coercive measures . . . or consent to the creation* in Asia Minor of a district in which the

Armenians should have exceptional privileges, and which would constitute the nucleus *of an independent kingdom of Armenia*, such being evidently the object the Armenian committees have in view."

These words are from the telegraphic dispatch; in the fuller mailed account of the interview they appear thus:—

"He feared that Her Majesty's Government, urged on by public opinion, or rather *the so-called public opinion*, which he believed had been the work of the Armenian committees, would be inclined to adopt a course with which Russia could not associate herself. The fact was, that the Armenian committees in London and elsewhere aimed at the creation in Asia Minor of a district in which the Armenians should enjoy exceptional privileges, and which would form the nucleus (*noyau*) of a future independent Armenian kingdom; and

to this Russia would not, and could not, agree."

On June 14th Prince Lobanoff again addressed the British Ambassador in this strain, adding, however, one significant phrase :—

"Russia *could not consent to the formation of a new Bulgaria* on her frontier."

On June 19th Lord Kimberley proposed "to demand an explicit reply from the Porte within forty-eight hours on the project of Armenian reforms." The reply from St. Petersburgh was that—

"the Emperor was unable to agree to this proposal, as His Majesty did not think there was sufficient ground for making a communication of such gravity, especially in view of the consequences which might result if the reply of the Turkish Government should prove unfavourable."

On the following day the Rosebery Govern-

ment resigned—nominally on the Cordite vote. During the formation of the Salisbury Ministry and the General Election there was necessarily a lull in these communications. Only two messages need be noted: Prince Lobanoff's characteristic intimations, in the first place that he had instructed M. de Nelidoff "to be careful *not to go too far in suggesting reforms to the Porte*," and in the second place that Russia's "direct interests on the (Armenian) frontier forbade her to indulge in the *philanthropic dreams* which seem to prevail in England." In the East, however, the Macedonian insurrection, and on July 15th the murder of Stambuloff, were symptoms of a generally alarming situation.

Lord Salisbury's first step was to inquire how far Russia would be prepared to go in putting pressure upon the Sultan. Once more Prince Lobanoff's answer was specific and unmistakeable:

"The idea of the employment of force

> was personally repugnant to the Emperor. . . . The employment of force *by any one of the Powers* would be equally distasteful to the Russian Government."

This was on August 29th. Four days later he added that

> "both the Emperor and himself were strongly against force being used *by any or all* of the Powers."

He had already observed that

> "the Russian Government was averse to undertaking any responsibility for the administration of any part of the Turkish dominions,"

thus ruling out an alternative which ignorant or uncandid Russophiles have often repeated since.

Thus justified and insured, and expecting, perhaps, to find Lord Salisbury more friendly than his predecessors in office, the Turk prepared to have a good time after his own manner. Russia's acceptance of the Sur-

veillance Commission, however reluctant, was therefore somewhat of a set-back; and Husny Pasha "became much perturbed," and "expressed surprise and regret." This, in turn, wrung from the sympathetic heart of the Russian Chancellor a plaint (August 28th) that he should be "reproached, after the line he had taken in attempting to modify the action of Her Majesty's Government," which, by the way, he always referred back to "the state of opinion in England," an unconscious tribute to the power of democracy from which let Englishmen extract comfort if they can! Even now, and to the trivial extent of a futile "Commission of Surveillance" for provinces already marked out for desolation—even thus far, Russia was not yet brought into line. The ingenious De Nelidoff discovered (after the scheme was accepted; but a motive of delay is never too late in Muscovite diplomacy) that "a claim to be represented on the Commission might

be put in by the other Powers who signed the Treaty of Berlin," and Prince Lobanoff objected to a Commission on which the Triple Alliance was to be represented. The objection may or may not have been genuine. If it was not, what becomes of the Chancellor's honesty and humanity? If it was, what of his regard for the "Concert of Europe"? When we say that Canon MacColl, having all the afore-quoted communications in front of him, treats this last one as "another proof of the initial error of not having made a friendly understanding with Russia the first step in the negotiations," it will be guessed that the fantastic length of the Canon's Russophilism places him on this point beyond the range of argument.

Lord Salisbury had now this advantage at least: he knew the true proportions of his enemy. The mask was off at last, and "Holy" Russia stood fully revealed as the

determined partner of the unholy Turk. A pretty *rôle* for the boy Tsar, whose amiable wife pictures him, they say, as "a distracted infant," surrounded in his high chair by "a crowd of anxious relatives, grand dukes, grand duchesses, flourishing feeding-bottles and napkins, and each insisting on his being fed in a different way." Let us fully grasp the tragic meaning of this memorable situation. For fifteen years Europe and the subject peoples had been waiting for reforms which never came. England had tacitly abandoned her old Turkophile *rôle*, and for three or four years the development of two new factors in the problem had been anxiously observed — the Tsar's patronage of the Sultan, the Sultan's patronage of the most hopelessly brutal and corrupt class of his servants. Sassun, with its 50,000 victims, seemed to be the culminating point of a long orgy of incarnate devilry. Every free and competent witness, official or unofficial,

declared that the time for coercion had come, that nothing less was of the least use. England, even her greatest Turkophile angered by repeated insult, proposed coercion. Russia tabled her veto, a veto defined with an exact completeness hardly equalled in the records of diplomacy. She did not want any further concessions to English public opinion. She did not want any more toleration of those Armenian exiles who, with their Western friends, through committees in London and elsewhere, sought to rouse the democracies to a sense of the horrible consequence of a mere maintenance of the *status quo*, and whose aims, by the way, Prince Lobanoff—his dreams as full of revolutionists as Mr. Dick's were full of King Charles' head—perpetually misrepresented. She did not want, indeed, a settled and self-governed Armenia; a "new Bulgaria" was the phrase in which the Chancellor luminously resumed that most effective barrier to autocratic

expansion, an independent democracy.* She did not want, would not tolerate, "measures of constraint" of any kind, whether by "any or by all" of the Powers — by any one of them, even Russia herself, acting as mandatory of the Concert, or by the three in unison. No doubt the wider bearing, the later consequences, of these deliberate pronouncements of June and August 1895 could not be at once imagined. But in their immediate application they constituted a stumbling-block of the first magnitude in the way of British statesmanship, and they rang the death-knell of the Armenian people. They represented no petty quibbling over details. Of course, no one had proposed the impossible task of setting up a

* Canon MacColl has attempted to limit the Russian declarations by suggesting ("The Sultan," etc., pp. 210, 240) that they were directed only against (1) coercion in support of an unworkable scheme of reforms; and (2) an independent Armenia to embrace the Armenian provinces of Russia. There is no such limitation, expressed or implied, in the despatches, and not a tittle of evidence that any such limitation was intended.

"New Bulgaria" in districts in some of which the Armenians were but a helpless minority. What Prince Lobanoff meant was that he would not have the dominion of his satrap, the Sultan, limited for, say, the rule of a Christian prince; he would not have the southern march of the Tsars barred by a reformed State whose "integrity" (moral as well as diplomatic) would have the double guarantee of European sponsors and a contented population. In brief, the Assassin had now a friend and protector acting not with attenuated arm from the cool distance of the North Atlantic Ocean, but from his own doorstep, and impelled not by dreams of a resurrected Arabia, but by the "material interests" of Pan-Slavonic Imperialism.

What was to be done? What would the reader's favourite statesman, now hypothetically established at the Foreign Office, have made of such a situation? There were quite a number of alternatives, but these may, for

the present purpose, be resolved into three. There was the policy of Drift, hoary with sanctions in our Imperial history, but in these later degenerate days commonly known as "action within the Concert"—Concert of three or Concert of six, what matters?—a Concert then newly dominated by a statesman who at a bound had made himself Autocrat not only of All the Russias, but of all Europe and half of Asia; a Concert then and now resolutely opposed to the "philanthropic dreams" of the English people. In the second place, there was the possibility of calling in a new alliance to redress the balance of the old. Finally, England might have resumed her independence—then to have acted as the fearless England of old time would have done, and as her separate obligations and her vast wealth and strength, just enhanced by a great growth of naval expenditure, might dictate; or to have waited her opportunity in truly "splendid isolation."

If these alternatives and the circumstances which gave them birth were visible to obscure laymen, they must have been visible to the British Cabinet. What did Lord Salisbury do ?

IV.

" So did she daunt the earth, and God defy!
And, wheresoe'er she spread her sovereignty,
Pollution tainted all that was most pure.
Shame followed shame, and woe supplanted woe—
Is this the only change that time can show?
How long shall vengeance sleep? Ye patient Heavens,
how long?
—Infirm ejaculation! from the tongue
Of Nations wanting virtue to be strong
Up to the measure of accorded might,
And daring not to feel the majesty of right."

WORDSWORTH.

" More men? More man! It's there we fail;
Weak plans grow weaker yit by lengthenin':
Wut use in addin' to the tail,
When it's the head's in need o' strengthenin'?
We wanted one that felt all Chief
From roots o' hair to sole o' stockin',
Square-set with thousan'-ton belief
In him an' us, ef earth went rockin'!"

LOWELL.

CHAPTER IV.

DRIFTING—AT THE TAIL OF THE "CONCERT."

Lord Salisbury Misses his Chance.—The Murder-Mill Again —Checkmate! — The Tsar's Tour: Cross-currents in English Opinion.— The Crowning Blunder: "Necessary Unanimity" v. "Isolated Action."—The Victorious Padishah.

Two years of disastrous trifling is the answer, which may be summed up in Lord Salisbury's words when, after the collapse of Greece, the question of mediation arose: the British instructions were "to join in any procedure which is acceptable to the others."* Unfortunately the one thing that is always most acceptable to the others (with the poor exception of Italy and the partial exception of France) is the humiliation of Democracy, especially in England. The first blunder was to give Russia the great natural advantage of a negative position. Instead of forcing her

* House of Lords, May 10th, 1897.

hand, instead of demanding what she wanted, we were content to inquire what she did not want. Silence is the most effective weapon in all the armouries of the Kremlin. The simplicity of Russian aims, the absence of the embarrassment of a public conscience, the natural skill of Russian diplomacy, the confidence of autocracy at the end of a reign of successful reaction—all these factors combined to inflate the figure of the stout little spectacled Chancellor to Napoleonic proportions. Perhaps the conventional Russia had got upon the brain even of our Prime Minister. Nicholas II. had not yet stood trembling with fright among the baillies of Aberdeen and the keepers at Balmoral; was still, in the eyes of a world of moles, the great White Tsar, mysterious, omnipotent. Perhaps Lord Salisbury thought he could play a game of *laisser faire* as well as Prince Lobanoff—an error he has had time to rue. At any rate, he did as little as possible, and did that little

ineffectually. How long will people mistake stolidity for strength, the painted lath for the flawless iron?

It can hardly be said that Great Britain had not her chance. It came directly after the negotiations which we have just detailed, while they were still fresh in mind. On September 30th, 1895, the Sultan, confident now of his safety, but uncertain how far he might go, played his most daring card. Pandemonium was raised not in the mountains of Kurdistan, but in the streets of his capital, under the very eyes of the Embassies. An innocent procession of Armenian petitioners was made the pretext for an onslaught by police, Softas, Kurds, and other Mussulmans, who, as Sir Philip Currie reported, "had been supplied with clubs"; and beside those killed and injured in the streets, hundreds of inoffensive people were thrown into prison or otherwise done away with. "The police treated the prisoners with the greatest

brutality; the cavass of the British Consulate saw four men brought into the courtyard of the Ministry of Police and bayonetted in cold blood." "Eighty bodies of Armenians which have been sent to the Armenian hospital" (we still quote from the British Ambassador's report) "showed by their condition that death was inflicted with frightful violence. Among the bodies was one of a pregnant woman who had been ripped open." Now was Britain's opportunity, if she were not to be for ever bound to a shameful impotence. So, at least, thought many men of weight upon the spot. One of them says:

> "If he" (Lord Salisbury) "had ordered the fleet to Constantinople at that time it would have come here without firing a gun, and would have been followed by the other fleets. There were some six weeks when this was possible. It would seem that he failed to see the importance of that first massacre until it was too late

to act. The British Government was enjoying a reaction just at that time. There was no one in London, not even an Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. Lord Salisbury himself was in France. When he returned, and the massacres commenced in the interior, he must have seen that the massacre at Constantinople was ordered for the purpose of testing the spirit of the Powers—to see what they would tolerate; but then, instead of acting, he consulted the other Powers, having probably the same faith in the Concert of Europe to which Lord Rosebery confesses; and so he lost the one and only opportunity he has ever had of independent action. If I had been the only person who recommended this action at the time, or if I were alone in asserting now that he ought to have acted then, I should be silent; but I know that this opinion was held then, and is held now,

> by persons whose official position entitles them to be heard; and I do not think that any Ambassador in Constantinople questions the fact that the British fleet might have come here last October (1895) without serious opposition."*

Lord Salisbury missed his chance, then; he went on "backing the wrong horse"; he tacitly submitted to the Russian veto. The Ambassadors—momentarily threatened by the British Fleet at Lemnos—secured their precious reform scheme, and protested against the massacre, informing the Porte that "there is every appearance of the authorities having encouraged them" (the murderers), "far from putting an end to their excesses." The Sultan promised inquiry (it will be understood by this time that, according to international law as it obtains in Turkey, it is quite the proper thing to set the chief

* Constantinople Correspondent of *The Speaker*, October 24th, 1896.

criminal up as the judge of his agents!)—and forthwith set the provincial murder-mill a-going.

It began at Trebizond on October 9th, when the affair "was so well organised that the butchery was conducted with discrimination as to race"; but "not much above 500" Armenians were killed and wounded, thanks to the protection given at the consulates and other public buildings. Consul Longworth, on the authority of the Acting-Consul of another Power, says: "It was a planned attack. The troops took a prominent part in the butchery. At five different parts of the town the slaughter commenced almost simultaneously, and this on the sound of a trumpet from the minaret of a mosque near the Government House." "We have information," said the British Ambassador, "that at Trebizond and Ak-Hissar" (half a day from Constantinople) "the Turks were encouraged by the military and police to

massacre the Armenians, on the ground that the latter intended to attack the Mussulmans." At Erzeroum "the Mussulman mob, which had been prepared for several days beforehand, made an attack on the Armenian shops, massacred all the Armenians they could, and then commenced a general pillage." The Consul "witnessed the burial of 309 bodies in one large grave. Eleven were those of women, one of whom had been strangled, and six of children." On the very day of Lord Salisbury's denunciation of the Sultan at the Guildhall* it was

* November 16th, 1895. The following sentences are worth recalling: "The demands of the three Ambassadors in May last have been substantially accepted by the Sultan. I saw somewhere over a great name the assertion that the Sultan had had a great victory over us. It was a very odd victory, because he gave us all we wanted, and I was very much puzzled at that opinion. . . . If you can persuade—I use the verb in its largest acceptation—if you can persuade the Sultan to give justice to the Armenians, you need not trouble yourself upon what paper the promise is written, or in what character it is couched. If the Sultan does not give justice, will not heartily resolve to give justice, to the Armenians, the most ingenious constitutions that you can weave together would not avail to protect or to assist them. . . .

telegraphed that one of the foreign Consuls found "the whole country between Trebizond and Erzeroum devastated. On the outskirts of Baiburt he counted 100 dead bodies lying together near the road. Nearly all the villages are burned, and in many cases the male population is entirely wiped out." At Sivas "the soldiers were ordered to attack the Armenians." In Gurun thousands of Turks, Circassians, and Kurds "swept through the Armenian quarter like a flood, shouting, 'Our Padishah wills it.' They broke into

---

It is a matter of bare fact, that so long as the Ottoman Empire stands upright, it is only through the Sultan that any blessings which you seek to confer upon any portions of his subjects can be made to them a reality and a permanent blessing. . . . But supposing the Sultan will not give these reforms, what is to follow? Well, the first answer that I should give is that, above all treaties, and above all combinations of external Powers, the nature of things, if you please —or the providence of God, if you please to put it so—has determined that persistent and constant misgovernment must lead the Government which follows it to its doom; and while I readily admit that it is quite possible for the Sultan of Turkey, if he will, to govern all his subjects with justice and in peace, he is not exempt, more than any other potentate, from the law that injustice will bring the highest on earth to ruin."

the houses, killed the men, and outraged the young women and girls. They cut open mothers with child, and tossed little children from knife to knife. After killing the people and plundering their all, the rabble set fire to the houses; old men and children, who had been hidden, perished in the flames." The British Ambassador thus summed up the situation on December 13th:—

"It may be roughly stated that the recent disturbances have devastated, as far as the Armenians are concerned, the whole of the provinces to which the scheme of reforms was intended to apply; that over an extent of territory considerably larger than Great Britain all the large towns, with the exception of Van, Samsoun, and Mush, have been the scene of massacres of the Armenian population, while the Armenian villages have been almost entirely destroyed. A moderate estimate puts the loss of life at 30,000. The survivors are in a state of absolute destitution, and in many places they are being forced to turn Mussulman. The charge against the Armenians of having been the first to offer provocation cannot be sustained. Non-Armenian Christians were spared, and the comparatively few Turks who fell were killed in self-defence. The participation of the soldiers in the massacres is in many places established beyond doubt."

It is a relief to have reached almost the uttermost depth of our disgrace in this awful catalogue of crime. There is no need to

trace at length what is but an elaboration of the lines of policy already explained. The weakness of the just invites the insolence of the successful ruffian. The Sultan replied to Lord Salisbury's scolding by excluding English newspapers, and by the quaint suggestion that the British Premier should "give good advice to the Armenians, and prevent English papers from abusing him." Official Russia displayed the same advance in impertinence. On November 4th Prince Lobanoff spoke "very warmly," "did not conceal his opinion that England was chiefly responsible for the state of things, owing to the encouragement of the Armenian committees by so many of her leading men." This was followed by the fatuous incident of the extra gunboats. M. de Nelidoff said "his instructions did not authorise him to act in concert with the other Ambassadors for any purpose except that of securing the safety of the foreign colonies in Constantinople." But this did

not prevent him from blocking Sir Philip Currie's efforts at every opportunity. When the Porte made any concession it was "in consequence of the representations of the Russian Ambassador." On December 13th Prince Lobanoff openly doubted Sir Philip's estimates of the loss of life by massacre, and was "much in favour of as little interference as possible in Turkish affairs at the present moment." On the 18th the British Minister suggested that instructions should be sent to the Ambassadors at Constantinople "to consult together and propose some remedy." Even this mild proposal came to nothing, although the news from Asia Minor continued to tell of unchecked ravages. Indeed, on the next day Sir Philip had to report that "unfortunately the Concert of the Ambassadors, so far as the Russian Ambassador is concerned, is limited to the protection of foreigners, and M. de Nelidoff does not consider himself authorised to enter into

discussion with his colleagues as to the general state of the Empire." Russia had now, in fact, brought Austria into line with France in her support—by what secret manœuvring is not yet told. Towards the end of January 1896 Lord Salisbury was finally checkmated, Prince Lobanoff waiving Sir P. Currie's brave protests aside, accepting the "goodwill now being shown by the Sultan," and "refusing to sanction any course of conduct which may lead to a European interference with the internal affairs of Turkey." On the very day of this last despatch a report was published that an offensive and defensive treaty on the lines of the Hunkiar-Skelessi agreement had been concluded between Russia and Turkey. Whether the statement as it was made be accurate or not, the fact of a Russo-Turkish agreement has been long beyond doubt.

Whatever the possibilities of action on the Bosphorus, a frank and courageous statesman

would have confided at least some indications of the changed situation to the people from whom he received his mandate. The one instinct of the British Government, on the other hand, seems to have been to hide the truth, and to trust to specious appeals to fear and "material interest." Thus, in the spring of 1896, there began to appear a curious cross-current in the usual channels of Western opinion. The popular awakening to the horrors of Turkish rule and the impotence (as it was supposed) of the Powers was unmistakeable. Lord Rosebery spoke of our position as one of apathy, which was hardly accurate, and of degradation, which was perfectly true. Mr. William Watson's sonnets, "The Purple East," gave noble expression to the indignation and horror which was sweeping over the public mind. Mr. Gladstone, in noble letters and burning speech, warned Europe that it would have to pay, and that in the eternal courts of justice

which give no remission of sentences, for its "unparalleled disgrace and defeat." In the press, in the pulpit, on the platform, British responsibility was acknowledged. At the same time persistent and vigorous efforts were made to work up a demand for an "Anglo-Russian *entente*" or "understanding." The plain moral of the Blue Books was lost in clouds of vacuous sentiment raised by the Coronation ceremonies in Moscow. The Sultan had now begun his infernal work in Crete, but the Russian partnership did not visibly extend to that scene. From May to August the way was being carefully prepared for the Tsar's European tour. Even greater expectations were entertained in Paris than in London; and these hopes were still further raised by the death of Prince Lobanoff, on the very eve of that mockery of the silly, spectacle-loving mob. How dangerous feeling had begun to grow in France may be gathered

from the words of M. de Pressensé, the Moderate-Liberal foreign editor of *Le Temps*.

"We must openly recognise that France, by limping too docilely behind Russia, by allowing herself to be eliminated and subalternised by an ally who knows how to use the situation to her own profit, and who has neither morbid scruples nor exaggerated delicacies, not only does not at all fill her traditional benevolent and glorious *rôle*, does not serve the cause of European solidarity, and does not reconcile (the Armenians to) the Sultan, but also loses every day something of her prestige, of her credit, and of her moral authority."

French demands and English hopes were soon dashed to the ground. In a brief visit to Russia immediately after Prince Lobanoff's death I found that his policy had thoroughly captured the imagination of the small class which runs the politics of the Empire, and that it would certainly not be thrown over by a mere change in the Chancellorship. In point of fact, M. Hanotaux and Count de Montebello failed as conspicuously as the Tsar's English relations to give a more liberal turn to Russian foreign policy. Lobanoff ruled from the grave. "Russia," as a St.

Petersburg correspondent said, "does not yield to France; she opposes all coercive measures against the Sultan." The Sultan is an autocrat, and it would be improper for Russia to extort things from him which she would never allow another State to extort from her. She will recommend Abdul Hamid to accept the reforms, but she will neither force him nor allow him to be forced."

This indeed soon became evident by the course of events and in a long series of fresh diplomatic communications. The mysterious seizure of the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople on August 26th led to a fresh massacre of Armenians, who, as Mr. Herbert put it, were "hunted down like rabbits," troops and police watching, when they were not actively participating in, the carnage. "There is evidence," wrote Mr. Herbert, "that the authorities organised and armed the mob which committed all the massacres on Wed-

nesday and Thursday. . . . From five to six thousand is a moderate estimate of the number of Armenians who were killed." Again, the Ambassadors directly accused the Sultan of organising the *battue*, and warned him that he was endangering his throne. Of course he was not doing anything of the kind. There is no place in which a murderer is safer than under the eyes of the Embassies in the city of Sancta Sophia. The following two sentences from a despatch from Lord Salisbury at this time suggest an ominous likeness between the ostensible objects of the Concert and the Turkish *camarilla:* "It is the common object of the European Powers that the Turkish Empire should be sustained." "The indiscriminate and wide-reaching slaughter of which the Turkish officials and a portion of the Moslem population under their guidance, or with their connivance, have been guilty, has had for its nominal aim the maintenance of the Sultan's Govern-

ment." The Sultan coolly threw the blame upon the handful of surviving revolutionists, and began forthwith to deport the remnants of the martyred people from the capital to the provinces, where they might be more conveniently disposed of. It is estimated that by massacre and expulsion the Armenian population of Constantinople was reduced from 53,000 to 24,000 souls. In September the old programme was opened in Anatolia. Kharput and Eguin were sacked and burned, and Sivas was desolated. Three or four days before, Sir Philip Currie had reported that "the Armenian reforms were at last completed;" on which Major Williams and Consul Hallward observe that "it is idle to talk of reforms unless they are preceded by a thorough reorganisation of the Empire."

Throughout the autumn there was close intimacy between the Russian Embassy in Constantinople and the Palace, and it was understood that ships were ready at the Black

28747

Sea ports for any emergency. The need never arose. Lord Salisbury made strong efforts to unite the Powers on a programme of reform backed by coercion, but stultified himself at the outset by inviting any one of the allies to wreck the whole plan.

> "It is an object of primary importance that the Concert of Europe should be maintained; and *as long as any of the Powers, or any one Power, is not satisfied* with the expediency of the recommendations that are put forward, *no action* in respect to them *can be taken.*"

This is the fatal phrase on which the subsequent proceedings of the Concert have been based. It is the "any or all" of Prince Lobanoff's despatches singularly inverted. Russia set her will against "any or all" the Powers; England, Cyprus Convention notwithstanding, finished the wreck of human hopes by formulating the hardly less drastic, and indeed supplementary, proposition that

nothing whatever should be done unless all the sacred Six agreed.*

This was bringing the "Cabinet of Europe" down to the level of the Russian village assembly, with a vengeance! That it constituted a mean and underhand abandonment of the Cyprus Convention (mean because we retain the reward without doing the work, underhand because unacknowledged), by the author of the Convention in particular and the chief apostle of the sanctity of treaties in general, matters more to Lord Salisbury's personal reputation than to the material interests at stake; for no really great statesman would ever have required the excuse of a separate treaty for pursuing the line of policy plainly mapped out as that along which alone the honour, interests, and responsibilities of Great Britain could be

* It is curious that while always insisting on the maintenance of the Concert of Six it is to the Treaty of Paris, with its Concert of Three, that Lord Salisbury refers back—as in the Queen's Speech, 1897, and his address to the Primrose League on May 6th, 1897.

satisfied. We need hardly say that we are not dealing here with Lord Salisbury as a party leader. If Lord Salisbury's party thinks that he is still standing between Russia and that Mecca of the old Toryism, Constantinople, then his party, as well as his country, is betrayed. We have nothing to do here with the mere party question.* We stand

* For that matter, some of the Premier's loyalest supporters have distinguished themselves by the courage and ability with which they have criticised his policy. The *Spectator* deserves specially honourable mention. The following sentences from its article upon the Mansion House speech of November 10th, 1896, are a sufficient answer to the shallow opposition to British independence which that utterance encouraged: "Lord Salisbury must be aware that the country, though it accepts his advice not to act alone, will not hold him successful unless his diplomacy produces definite and considerable results. It feels humiliated, if he does not, and is longing for some measure of success in the fulfilment of what it believes to be a duty. At present it is simply beaten. The Sultan is triumphant all along the line. He has slaughtered the *protégés* of Europe, the objects of so many diplomatic efforts, as he pleased; and he not only has not been punished, but all the Powers are declaring that if he only behaves a little better he cannot be. That is irritating, as irritating as it is to hear it declared by the mouth of the Premier that the British Fleet, on which we are now spending such vast sums, is, as regards a third-rate Power like Turkey, as incompetent as if it did not exist. . . . Surely this profession of powerlessness is exaggeration for

face to face with one of the grossest and most disastrous blunders of English statesmanship, and feel no disposition to mince words in such a matter. Lord Salisbury has been praised as the father of the Concert of Europe. There is not much to boast of, so far, in that paternity. But it is not the idea of a Concert, but the way its possibilities

---

the purpose of debate. Lord Salisbury might as well say that because the French Fleet cannot steam up the Isis to protect Frenchmen in Oxfordshire, therefore the French Fleet can do nothing against England. There is not a Government in the world so exposed to maritime attack as that of Turkey. If we can pass the Dardanelles we can, as Mr. Gladstone showed years ago, cleave the Empire in two; and if we cannot pass the Dardanelles, port after port, Salonica, Alexandretta, Smyrna, Jeddah, lie absolutely at our mercy. Does the Premier mean that the Sultan would not be coerced by the loss of Macedonia, or the stoppage of half his Customs, or the announcement that in future we regard Arabia as independent of him? . . . Does he believe that no house can be secured against burglary unless policemen are seated in its hall? The whole passage was, we are confident, a grave mistake; and though if British diplomacy succeeds it will be forgotten, it will be quoted in very angry tones in the next debate upon a grant for the perfecting of the Fleet." Unfortunately, this last prophecy had very meagre fulfilment, Parliamentary Radicalism, even more conspicuously than Parliamentary Toryism, having lost touch with the best of its old traditions.

have been ruined, that is wrong. It is a Concert of necessary unanimity, a Concert delivered over in advance into the hands of any one of the three Emperors, which has vitiated the European situation, and set back the hands of liberty and progress; and that is the Concert for which Lord Salisbury is responsible.

Of course the arch-reactionaries and their tame partners jumped at this scheme. In the course of lengthy negotiations France agreed to the principle of coercing the Sultan on condition that the "integrity of the Ottoman Empire" were maintained, that there were no "isolated action," and (shades of Egypt!) that no condominium were established. At last, after again expressing her "extreme repugnance," Russia was induced to say that she "would not object *to advise as to* coercive measures, if the Sultan should prove recalcitrant and refuse to accept the reforms *unanimously* recommended by the

Ambassadors." One loophole is usually good enough for a trained diplomatist; a Muscovite could do with half a one. On this occasion he reserved himself two. The Sultan had never been anything else than recalcitrant; yet there has been no coercion—such a thing is no longer even discussed.

One great soul was still undaunted. On September 24th Mr. Gladstone uttered his clarion call to the nations against the "Great Assassin." Every man has his peculiar fate. On October 8th Lord Rosebery resigned the high post which Mr. Gladstone had given him, and on the following day made his defence at Edinburgh, condemning separate action by Great Britain as likely to lead to a European war which "would transcend twenty Floddens," and denying that we were pledged by the Cyprus Convention—"a dead letter since it was signed."*

* This reference must be read in contrast with that of the Foreign Secretary in the Rosebery Ministry, Lord Kimberley, in March 1895: "Rustem Pasha asked me on what grounds we based our right to interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey.

The speech, directly and through the rift it made in the Liberal party, practically destroyed the Armenian agitation. Lord Salisbury seemed to disown the policy which he inaugurated in 1878 and revived in 1895–6 in his speech on the re-opening of Parliament in 1897; but it soon appeared that he was only confessing a blunder to which he felt bound to adhere in his reference to "the mistake that was made when we put all our money on the wrong horse." Fresh evidence of the failure of European intervention and its ghastly results continued to come to hand through the winter. The Consuls reported:

"The reforms are so much waste paper. There is anarchy, bloodshed, pillage, extortion on every side. The Christian officials named in the reforms are chosen for their uselessness, and they are unpaid. . . . It is difficult to believe that

---

I expressed some astonishment at this inquiry, as, I said, I thought he must be aware that, as regards the Armenians, WE HAD THE MOST PLAIN AND UNDOUBTED RIGHT, BASED upon the Treaty of Berlin and THE CYPRUS CONVENTION of 1878, and not only had we, in common with the other Powers, a right to interfere, but THESE TREATIES LAID UPON US MOST SERIOUS OBLIGATIONS THAT WE COULD NOT NEGLECT."

any real reform can be introduced or prosper in this atmosphere of anarchy and bankruptcy. The foulest criminals and murderers are at large throughout the vilayet, and respected for their wealth—the spoil of their victims. In Arabkir I hear that there are in that town 1,138 Armenian widows and 1,943 orphans. The massacre at Eghin seems to have been entirely a got-up affair by the authorities. Neither women nor children were spared."

On March 19th, 1897, a new massacre took place at Tokat, and the loss of life was estimated at 2,000. Two priests were reported to have been horribly mutilated, their eyes gouged out, their noses and ears cut off, and one of them partially scalped. Such is "the integrity of the Ottoman Empire" up to date.

Still the "aged and distinguished statesman"—whom Lord Salisbury compares * with a member of Parliament who is neither aged nor distinguished nor a statesman, but whose childish exploits at the seat of war have won him the unofficial title of Silomo Pasha—still Mr. Gladstone held up with splendid constancy the light of his "unextinguishable

* Speech of May 10th, 1897.

hope." For the rest the world seemed sunk in a slough of shameful impotence, above which in the lurid East the form of the Assassin stood triumphant. Even yet the worst had not come; the depth of British turpitude had not been reached when the united forces, paid for by the blood of democratic Europe, were consolidated under a necessarily unanimous Concert, and thus handed over by Lord Salisbury to the Tsar's agent at Constantinople. So far as Armenia was concerned we could at least plead Russia's immediate interest and immediate power. We could plead that, bad as our part had been, the part of the official Russia had been infinitely worse. We did not know quite how bad, but we knew that the young Tsar, in whom so many indulgent hopes centred, had either chosen, or had been forced, to play patron and protector of the man who was still carrying on his infamies in Turkish bagnios and Armenian villages; and we

could, and did, invoke the Divine vengeance on all such base partnerships. It is no less important now to remember this fact. In the cause of the blind and dumb millions of Russia, as well as of the rest of Europe, it was, and is, necessary to repeat that the blood of Armenia lies at the door of the Russian autocracy, that the first distinction of Nicholas II. was his partnership with "Abdul the Damned," that the Tsar had made himself the Sultan's master only by first becoming his servant in a piece of work which will cover its authors' names with infamy so long as human records last. That truth remains. But the taunt is frozen on our lips when we come to speak of Crete, and again when we come to speak of Greece. In that juncture, at least, English force was absolutely paramount, even against "any or all" of the Concert; and English influence, if not as overwhelming, should have been at least as far predominant as Russian influence had

been in regard to Armenia. It was one thing to maintain the Concert at Constantinople; it was quite another to maintain it at Canea. It was one thing to wish to protect the "integrity" of Turkey on the north and in the Straits, quite another to maintain the same doctrine in regard to an island in the Mediterranean whose destinies, as we have already shown, were clearly declared by its history, and to level against its would-be liberators an even extremer veto than that which Russia levelled against us at Constantinople. That we stood idly by through the Walpurgis Night of the Sick Man's transformation into the Assassin was something for the fiends to glory in. But who in their wildest dreams could have thought to see England helping to bring the Turk back into the fertile plains of Thessaly, helping to rally the fighting legions of the Crescent, and to raise the Assassin to a still higher seat as the Conquering Khalif?

THE EVENTS IN CRETE.

V.

"Who would be free themselves must strike the blow.
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought.
Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye? No!"

BYRON.

"No man who had turned his attention to the subject could doubt that the political existence and the defence of Greece would depend on the possession of that island."

PALMERSTON (1830).

"Are we really to commence our twentieth century under the shadow of a belief that conventions set up by the policy of the moment are everything, and that community of blood, religion, history, sympathy, and interest are nothing? In respect to everything that makes a man to be a man, every Cretan is a Greek. The Ottoman rule in Crete is a thing of yesterday; but Crete was part of Greece, the Cretan people of the Greek people, at least 3,000 years ago, nor have the moral and human ties between them ever been either broken or relaxed."

MR. GLADSTONE 1897).

THE EVENTS IN CRETE.

CHAPTER V.

THE CRISIS PREPARING.

The Destiny of Crete: Lord Holland, Palmerston, and Prince Leopold.—Moslem Wreckers.—Fair Warning.—The Victorious Insurgents.—Heroes of Zeitun.—Count Goluchowski's Sympathy.—Lord Salisbury Misses Another Chance.

ANOTHER book of Turkish misrule is opened. But again it is only the last chapters, and in those only the narrative of events, rather than any deeper considerations of racial, political, and religious affinity, that now concern us. Two years of such a history as that of Crete would suffice to damn the most specious and well-meaning of Governments; but for those who wish for more, good sources of information are easily available, and reference to them will be found in a

popular sketch quite lately issued.* Nor do we propose to recount the familiar accumulations of evidence as to the close connection of the island's destinies with those of Greece. N. Gennadius has reminded us that that connection was admitted and vindicated in the British Parliament as long ago as 1830, when Lord Holland uttered a prophecy which has had in the intervening period, and is having at this very day, a terribly complete fulfilment. "My Lords," he said,

"the day will come when we shall rue the errors of which our Government have been guilty, . . . when our neglect of the opportunity of adding Candia to the territories of Greece . . . will reflect upon ourselves with a force of which no man can see the remote consequences. . . . However wise, however prudent . . . the head of the Greek Government may be, . . . he must either connive at his own subjects carrying on clandestine intercourse with the insurgents in Candia, or he must openly espouse the cause of their oppressed brethren. If such be his determination, what then will be the consequence? . . . A new war, which may embroil all the Powers of Europe in dispute."

At the same time, Lord John Russell declared that Crete should have been united to Greece

* "A Short Popular History of Crete," by J. H. Freese, M.A.

under the Treaty of 1827; and Sir James Mackintosh said: "Candia, essential to the safety of Greece, . . . cannot be excluded from its territory without endangering the existence of the State." Lord Palmerston added: "The Secretary of State" (Sir Robert Peel) "had altogether failed in showing that the addition of Crete to the territory of Greece was not essential to the well-being of the new State. No man who had turned his attention to the same subject could doubt that the political existence and the defence of Greece would depend on the possession of that island." Prince Leopold's refusal of the Hellenic crown because this necessity was not allowed has been already noted. In giving his decision Prince Leopold addressed the Duke of Wellington in these memorable words:—

"I am afraid that the hidden interest which caused this separation to be determined will augur no good to the new State. The exclusion of Candia will cripple the Greek State both morally and physically, will make it weak and poor,

expose it to constant danger from the Turks, and create, from the beginning, innumerable difficulties for him who is to be at the head of the Government. Is it likely that the Greeks, henceforth in an improved position, should slacken in their sympathy for their countrymen and fellow-Christians? Or is it more likely that the Candiotes, with the accomplishment of the Greek cause before their eyes, should forget that they are Greeks themselves? For what am I to infer from these propositions for the entire pacification of Candia—a point of the greatest moment to the Greek Government? Certainly not grounds of confidence that its inhabitants will peaceably return under the Turkish dominion. And what mode of pacification will then remain? In my opinion, nothing but the force of arms."

These sober and authoritative pronouncements were based upon the deeper considerations which, as we have said, we must here overlook, but which have received aggravation in every subsequent year. They would have held their force if Turkey had enjoyed a moral, as she is now enjoying a military, resurrection; they would have held their force if there had been no more extortion and oppression, no more broken covenants, no more sectarian strife. Comfortable Englishmen, careless of the history of their own country, forget the processes by

which hastening ills enlarge a hope, a dream, an ambition, into a dire necessity, a counsel of despair. Some Englishmen, less comfortable, less sodden with commercialism and its conventions, can only wonder perpetually at the patience of the victims of wrongs whose horror we can hardly guess. God be praised! there are still corners of this cooling globe in which—Concerts, and other autocratic conspiracies notwithstanding—the spirit of Wat Tyler, of Pym and Hampden, of Joan the Maid and the best Crusaders, lives on, redeeming the time, and winning immortality.

There had been little peace in the island since the virtual abrogation of the Halepa Convention in 1889. At last—after a reform or insurrectionary committee had been formed, and a body of insurgents had come into conflict with the Turkish troops—the Ambassadors at Constantinople induced the Sultan, in the spring of 1895, to convoke the

National Assembly, and to appoint a Christian Governor. Soon after Carathéodori Pasha had taken his post, he told Consul Biliotti

> "that nothing more deplorable than the state of the finances could be imagined; that the Gendarmerie, mostly consisting of unfit elements, was not in a condition to maintain public security; that in recent cases of murder he had been under the necessity of performing the duties of Procureur Impérial, Juge d'Instruction, etc.; and that generally the officials act as if the only object of their holding Government offices was to secure salaries for themselves."*

For a time all went well. The Assembly met and adjourned. "For the first time in Crete—except, perhaps, before 1880—the Christian and Mussulman Deputies have acted in perfect concert." This was not at

* Despatch of May 1st, 1895. The following summary of events is based upon the Blue Books, Turkey, No. 7 (1896), and No. 8 (1897).

all what the above-described officials wanted, and we are driven to the conclusion that they had a certain backing among the Mohammedan population. At any rate, the British Consul reported, at the end of August, that

> "according to all appearances, native Mussulmans made up their mind to wreck the administration of Carathéodori Pasha, so as to show the impossibility of Crete being governed by Christian Valis. . . . The slightest incident at Selinos may cause a serious conflict between the two races, which are of nearly equal strength. The danger extends all over the island, and will exist as long as the situation of the Government in Crete remains as at present, that is (without speaking of other deficiencies), with an empty treasury safe and an inefficient Gendarmerie, which, besides, has to receive arrears of salaries amounting to upwards of £40,000. The Porte does not seem

> to realise the state of affairs in Crete, and may find itself disagreeably awakened to the reality when it will be too late to remedy it by ordinary measures."

During the following month he warned the British Government that the Gendarmerie officers connived at the murder of Christians "by the Mussulman committees," and that one or two more such crimes "may set the island in a blaze." In October these aggravations continued, "low-class Mussulmans" threatening to make the Christians repent any reforms extorted from the Sultan in Armenia. Crete was, in fact, to be a new victim of the rage of the ruling Turk against his paralysed guardians. On November 7th the last straw seemed to have been added when the Porte's rejection of the Cretan Budget and loan proposals, and refusal to sanction the few laws passed by the Assembly, were announced. A small body of armed insurgents was now encamped

at Apokorona, growing in numbers as the weight of grievances became more oppressive, and preparing for a rising in the spring. In despatch after despatch the British Consul in Canea and the British Minister in Athens gave warning of the impending crisis, the latter adding that the Greek Government "is not giving, and is not likely to give," encouragement to the insurgents. On December 3rd, Lord Salisbury, his cheek still red, as it were, from the Russian rebuff at Constantinople, sent one of his mild protests to the Porte, being careful to explain that he was

> "actuated by no wish to interfere in the affairs of Crete, or to suggest any course of action; but desiring only, in a spirit of friendship"

—"*friendship*" with the Assassin!—that complications should be avoided. A fortnight later our Ambassador at Constantinople gave him plain notice of his personal belief that "the Turkish Government is incapable

of taking any effectual steps to remedy the present state of things in Crete." Revenge, the one prescription of the Porte, is, truly, no "effectual remedy." Turkish troops having now been repulsed by the insurgents, more were sent, in spite of Consular protests and Ambassadorial accounts of how the Porte was converting "less than a dozen politicians into an armed force of excited peasantry."

During January and February 1896 several detachments of troops were landed amid the "jubilation" of the Moslem scum. Greece warned Turkey that she was driving the islanders to insurrection, "in which case 50,000 Turkish troops would be needed to quell it, as well as a naval blockading force, which Turkey could no longer supply." On March 7th, the Christian Vali was superseded by a Mussulman, Turkhan Pasha, and Consul Biliotti telegraphed that since his arrival "attempts at murder and murders are daily committed by Mussulmans against Chris-

tians." The troops were again repulsed by the "Epitropi," and the Porte postponed the annual meeting of the Assembly, an illegal action against which Greece duly protested, but which was more formally than really important, since the constitution was practically abrogated by the refusal to enact the measures of the previous session. Fighting was now frequent, and the insecurity of life such, said the Consul (May 13th), "that the whole population was in continual dread and despair, which might end in a general conflagration." On May 28th, the Sultan ordered sixteen battalions to be added to the Cretan garrison of fifteen battalions, and eight more to be in readiness to sail. The Turkish Government, Mr. Herbert wired from the Constantinople Embassy,

> "are determined to quell the insurrection by force with their customary severity. I think, in view of this probability and the Zeitun experience, we should be

very careful how we allow our Consul to give any guarantees."

On the same day Captain Drury, of H.M.S. *Hood*, which had been called to Canea, reported:—

"At Halepa the Consulates are full of refugees, the streets quite deserted, all the shops closed, Roman Catholic Church crowded with women and children, and, in fact, inhabitants in a very excited state. Several murders have taken place, estimated about thirty, of which two-thirds are Christians."

Three days later the condition of the refugees was "pitiable"; the shutters of shops and houses were "riddled with bullets." "Eye-witnesses unanimously assert that soldiers took part in the work of plunder and destruction, and that the superior officers made no attempt to restrain them." Lists of murders and minor crimes followed in quick succession. Between May 29th and June 4th nearly

10,000 troops were landed. Some of them had won their spurs at Zeitun; "and they look like it!" observed the sententious Captain. Consul Biliotti begged Lord Salisbury, if he did not want "a repetition of the disturbances in Anatolia," to make the Sultan issue "severe and peremptory orders." The usual representations were made; but—said Mr. Herbert—the Grand Vizier,

> "who appeared to be in an unconciliatory frame of mind, replied that the demands of the Cretans were exorbitant, and that first of all order must be re-established. . . . It seems evident that the Porte is determined to resort to strong military measures, and to give the Cretans a severe lesson."

The French Ambassador got the same reply, and concluded that "the Turkish Government was at present unwilling to make any concessions whatever." In fact, further reinforcements were ordered out. "Pillage

and fire mark the passage of the troops," wrote the British Consul, who reported thus upon a visit to the remains of the Christian village of Galata :—

"The depredations, pillage, and desecration which have taken place, if not carried out by the soldiers themselves, were perpetrated under their eyes, and in any case with their tacit consent. . . . The walls, roofs, and some of the windows and doors are all that now remain. There is not a single piece of furniture left, as that which was not carried away has been destroyed. The churches have all been desecrated, and the pictures, gospel lamps, and altars have been wrecked. . . . Nearly all the Christian tombs had been violated, and here and there a few bones were still out of the sepulchres. . . . The British Consul's was among the number; he, too, has had his house and wine cellars wrecked."

On the very day on which he received this shocking news we find Lord Salisbury expressing to the Turkish Ambassador the hope that the Sultan

> "would pursue *a moderate and reasonable policy* in view of the many difficulties by which his dominion in Crete was surrounded. *The object of England was to maintain the present distribution of territory;* but he must be well aware that there were many persons who desired to alter it, and to alter it to the prejudice of the Sultan's rights. Under these circumstances, I earnestly hoped that he would listen to the unanimous counsels tendered by the representatives of the Powers at Constantinople, and would confide in their desire to benefit not only his Cretan subjects, but also *to maintain the rights which he possessed* under existing treaties."

So much for flabby England! One cannot help

reflecting how different the case might have seemed had the Premier's holiday *château* been situated in the village of Galata, instead of on the peaceful Riviera! And what of the other Powers? The virulent hostility of Germany to Greece and all her relations was manifest from the beginning. The patience and moderation of the Hellenic Government was testified even by the British Premier, who telegraphed to Constantinople :—

> "So far as I am able to judge, it is the sincere desire of the Greek Government to avoid any serious trouble, and to abstain from affording encouragement to the insurgents."

Yet when Greece asked for German mediation at the Porte

> "Baron von Marschall, who was suffering from indisposition at the time, had sent a message to M. Rangabé that it was notorious that the responsibility for the state of affairs in Crete fell upon the

Greek Government, and that the German Government had no intention of sharing that responsibility" (May 22nd, Despatch of Sir F. Lascelles).

A few days later the Baron added that the situation would only become serious if Greece intervened, "and in her present bankrupt condition he did not see how this was possible." This allusion was made plainer on June 6th, by Mr. Gosselin, who telegraphed that "in view of the irritation felt here" (Berlin) "with regard to the Greek Debt," it was unlikely that Germany would give any help to the Cretan people. The demoralisation of the Mammon-worshipper has rarely been more impudently avowed; but if the hand was that of Mammon it must be remembered that the tongue was embittered by Russian influence and by the access of Anglophobia which followed the Transvaa crisis. Very different at this moment was the attitude of Austria. Alas! that she was

so soon to fall away from humane and honest words which might have gone down in history as the charter of Cretan liberty and independence.

> "Moderation has been counselled by Count Goluchowski both at Athens and at Constantinople. His Excellency, however, fears that events have gone to such lengths that an irresistible popular current may carry away the King of Greece and his Government. *In his opinion the blame for the present situation lies entirely with the Turks themselves; and it will be impossible for Greece to stand aloof if acts of savagery take place in the island. Under such circumstances she would probably have much European sympathy on her part.*"*

Once more the Sibyls presented their lessening scrolls to the British Premier, and once more he rejected them. England would

* May 27th. Despatch No. 139, p. 86, Turkey, No. 7 (1896).

continue to make her platonic representations, but would do nothing more.

"Beyond the efforts which we should make, in conjunction with our allies, to influence the Sultan in the pursuit of a wiser policy, I did not see that it was open to us to interfere with advantage. So many interests were bound up in Crete, and so much jealousy existed, or had existed in the past, with respect to any exclusive influence over it, that I did not imagine that any of the Powers of Europe would desire to take isolated action with respect to it. If there was such a Power it certainly would not be Her Majesty's Government. They did not contemplate any active policy, except so far as such a policy might be the result of the unanimous concurrence of the Powers."*

* June 11th. Interview with M. de Courcel. Despatch to the Marquess of Dufferin.

Three things are to be noticed about this turning-point of the Cretan situation. In the first place, the Concert of Europe, so far as Crete was concerned, was not yet constituted. So far as Crete is concerned it was Lord Salisbury—fresh from his defeat at Constantinople, and full of experience of the bitter futility of that instrument—who brought the Concert into being. In the second place, it was to France, the friend of our people but apparently the foe of our statesmen, that this chilly negation of "any active policy"—instead of a bold plan of joint or separate intervention—was proposed. In the third place, it constituted, coming immediately after the sympathetic words of the Austrian Chancellor, not only an abandonment of British independence, in a region where our strength would be paramount, but a virtual veto upon the activity of any humaner and more courageous Power, even of too-patient Greece, our once beloved

protégé. This is carrying the backing of the "wrong horse" up to the point of superlative infatuation. Why *did* he do it? The blunder seems utterly gratuitous. A word of encouragement from Great Britain, following upon those words of Count Goluchowski, to say nothing of the probable sympathy of Italy and France, and Greece would have saved another of the Assassin's victims, would have saved thousands of Cretan and Greek, to say nothing of Turkish, lives; not perhaps without bloodshed, but certainly without a Continental war. The whole affair would have been ended in a week; and not least of the gains would have been the gain of British honour, since blown to smithereens by the percussion shells of H.M.S. *Camperdown*, "to the strains of the Hamidieh hymn." Lord Salisbury preferred to ape the achievements of Holy Russia; but he must have asked himself more than once in later days the question which rises again and again upon

our own lips, Why *did* he do it? A month later the chance had passed. Count Goluchowski—now safely nobbled by Russia and Germany—was professing anxiety that the Cretans should be warned that they could gain nothing by revolt, as, "if their excessive pretensions were once successful, such encouragement would be given to similar aspirations in Macedonia as would lead to very serious consequences." And when, in the same month, Germany objected to the distribution of British alms by the British Consul in Canea as an outrageous instance of "isolated action," the Premier bowed in humble acceptance of the unanswerable argument!*

---

*. Blue Book, Turkey, No. 7 (1896), No. 338, p. 192.

VI.

"I never thought a scion of our stock
Could grow the wood to make a weathercock."

* * * *

"Oh for three weeks of Crommle an' the Lord!"

"God hates your sneakin' creturs thet believe
He'll settle things they run away an' leave!"

LOWELL.

"The attempt of any Government in Europe to support the Turkish power for the avowed purpose of riveting the chains of their unhappy Christian subjects would scarcely be tolerated. I beg entirely to disclaim any view of this question influenced by the associations of ancient history or under the effects of early enthusiasm. . . . You are good enough to pray that 'Time and Providence' may bring relief to their (the Greeks') sufferings, but can we be surprised at their desire to hasten this time and to assist the action of Providence? This is a struggle to which nothing in the civilised world can present the least analogy. . . . The slavery of the Greeks admits of no alleviation, and the very principle of the Turkish Government forbids all improvement in their condition."

LORD ABERDEEN (to Castlereagh, 1821).

CHAPTER VI.

OUR ONE ACHIEVEMENT.

The Bloody Summer (1896).—*The Blockade Proposal.—Lord Salisbury Refuses: His Admirable Despatches.—Anarchy, Continued.—A New Reform Scheme.—Wanted, a Man!*

THE island was now ablaze, in fullest accordance with Consul Biliotti's forecast. Murder, arson, panic, and starvation were prevalent on every hand. The insurgents, steadily reinforced by the despairing Christian population, held their own against the troops. On June 25th the Ambassadors had presented a joint Note to the Porte, demanding—(1) a suspension of offensive measures against the insurgents; (2) a general amnesty; (3) the immediate convocation of the Assembly; (4) the restoration of the Halepa Convention; (5) a Christian Governor; and these terms were accepted—in the Sultan's sense—on July 3rd. Georgi Berovich, a Christian, was

appointed Governor. As a matter of fact, he was always overshadowed by the Military Governor, Abdullah, and was practically powerless for lack of money and a police force. Nine days after the nominal promise to cease hostilities, the Turkish troops were still engaging the insurgents, and a Turkish gunboat was treating them to a nine-hours' bombardment. The restoration of the Constitution needed changes which were impossible in the then state of the island, and for which the Christian Deputies called in vain. The Greek Government—despite endeavours the earnestness of which the British Ambassador repeatedly testified to—were becoming quite unable to prevent the departure of volunteers, with stores and other aid, to the island. One thing only would have brought peace, and that obvious step—the withdrawal of Turkish troops—is just the one thing which the Powers have never demanded down to the present day.

Then followed the blockade proposal, the idea coming from Russia, and being modified and presented by Austria. This was on July 27th. It was avowedly directed not against the insurgents, but against Greece. The Cretans might cut each other's throats, might "stew in their own juice," to the end of time, so far as the Crowned Heads of Europe were concerned; but there should be no breaking through their prize-ring, no unseemly interruptions in their cock-pit. Greece was to stop the departure of men and the export of arms, or else the Concert would "restore to the Sultan his liberty of action," and blockade the island into the bargain. This was rather too stiff for the Concert's own father, who very properly protested that

> "the liberty of action of the Sultan or of his officers during the past winter, had been exercised in a manner which would give to the phrase associations

and significance far removed from those which the Austrian Government would desire to attach to it."

Lord Salisbury therefore proposed to notify (perhaps the difference is more one of words than of substance, but we have seen so much of English policy at its worst that we are anxious to make the most and best of the episode which follows) that

"it would be impossible for the Powers to prevail over the Sultan to abstain from taking such measures as might be necessary for the purpose of restoring his authority in the island."

To the blockade proposal he objected warmly, in a series of admirable despatches.

"Such a blockade as was proposed *would, in effect, place Great Britain in the position of an ally of the Sultan*, in the task of repressing the insurrection of his Christian subjects. In the case of a conflict between a Government and

its subjects, Her Majesty s Government had almost invariably thought it their duty to abstain from any kind of intervention. In the present instance, their reluctance to interfere would be much accentuated by the strong feeling which the recent administration of the Ottoman Government in Asiatic Turkey has excited. If the naval action of the allied fleets should be successful in preventing the importation of military supplies for the insurgents, and the result should be that the Sultan obtained a military victory over them, it would hardly be contended that the Powers were not in some degree responsible for any use that the Sultan might think fit to make of that military success. If we had any means by which we could guarantee that the success would not be abused, and that no measures would result from it which would be offensive

to European feeling, the difficulty of acceding to the Austrian proposal would be much diminished. But *I knew of no such guarantee*, and without it it was clearly, in any case, impossible that Her Majesty's Government should take part in the operations which were suggested."*

France and Italy do not appear in this exchange of views; it is, for once, England against the three Autocrats. Germany supported her ally; but why should Germany have counted, seeing that she had intimated that, having no man-of-war available, she could give only "moral support" to such a blockade? Russia wanted it to commence at once, and thought Notes to Greece a mere waste of time. The Austrian Chancellor was "extremely agitated and impressed with the difficulties of the situation" when he received Lord Salisbury's

* Blue Book, No. 7 (1896), No. 389, pp. 224, 225.

refusal. Well he might be! We think we see the Austrian and Russian fleets trying to blockade Crete, with Germany's "moral support"! The English Premier had his own old bogey of a great Continental war played off upon him. Count Goluchowski made vague but petulant allusions to "Parliamentary tactics" and "home politics" as a factor in the English attitude, and added that "the abstention of Her Majesty's Government would certainly intensify the suspicions already entertained of British policy, not by himself but in other quarters." Sir E. Monson warmly repelled these impertinences — so characteristic of the "Cabinet of Europe." Little knowing what was to follow in the present year, our Ambassador observed that no English Government "would be likely to consent to take part in coercing the Christians, and in replacing the Mussulmans in the enjoyment of the position they had systematically

abused." It was no question of "tactics," "but one of the unanimous sentiment of the British public, with which Her Majesty's Government must not only take account but must sympathise." Then Sir Edward threw out, on his own initiative, what was practically the germ of the later, the too-much later, autonomy scheme. To the German Ambassador Lord Salisbury still further explained himself. The British Government's objection to the blockade

> "would be accentuated by the fact that they would be *intervening in opposition to Christian insurgents who had very solid grievances to complain of*. . . . Her Majesty's Government, therefore, shrank from taking part by material intervention in the work of restoring the authority of the Sultan when they had at their disposal no means of insuring that the restored authority would be exerted with moderation and justice." But "if

Greece were to assume a hostile attitude to the Turkish Government, and make any aggression upon the independence or integrity of the Turkish Empire, the collective guarantee into which the Powers entered at the Treaty of Paris would become a matter of serious consideration; and if all the Powers resolved to give effect to it, I thought it quite possible that Great Britain might think that abstention would not be consistent with her engagements under that Treaty. But . . . mere inefficiency in preventing the export of arms did not constitute an infraction of the Treaty of Paris; and there was every reason for believing that the Greek Government was in earnest. . . . I added, as a secondary objection to the proposal, that *I very much doubted its success.* . . . Some of the Powers were now urging a blockade on the ground that it did

not consist with their dignity to allow their recommendations to be set at naught; but I feared that if the blockade was tried and failed they would think it still less consistent with their dignity to acquiesce in such a result, and the question of military occupation, with all the rivalries and entanglements which it would involve, would then be forced upon us for decision."

If the action of the leaders of the Concert were equal to their foresight! But even Lord Salisbury could hardly foresee in agreeing to a blockade that his partners would avenge its failure by sending the Turkish horde into Thessaly. On August 3rd Austria developed a new plan—a blockade *plus* a Consular Commission—to mediate between the Cretans and the Porte. Again Lord Salisbury replied most admirably:—

"*It was not an even-handed proceeding* to give the Sultan the assistance of the

ships which would intervene by force, while giving the Cretans the assistance of a Commission which could only interfere by representations."

And, as he added in a fuller despatch (No. 453, pp. 265, 266):—

"If the Sultan refused to accept these proposals made to him, or if, what was much more probable, he accepted them and failed to carry them out, there was no hint that force was to be used against him. *It was deeds on one side and mere words on the other.*"

The reader is now in a position to appreciate the strength and weakness of the English position. It is not accurate to represent Lord Salisbury as opposed to any blockade, or to a blockade on its merits. He objected to a Turkish blockade followed by massacre and general scandal; and he also objected to an unconditional blockade by the Powers, as giving the Porte an unfair advan-

tage, and as involving ulterior difficulties. On the other hand, in spite of his admission of Cretan grievances and Greek patience, he had no love either for the insurgents* or for the Greeks, and his pet delusion of the importance of Turkish "integrity" still lay heavy upon him. In this very moderate attitude the Premier was sustained so long as the Armenian and Cretan agitation in England retained its full vigour. Then came the visit of Nicholas II. to the European Courts and to this country, and the *canard* of the young Tsar's "conversion," and of a new Anglo-Russian combination in the Near East; followed by Lord Rosebery's speech, and the relief of the pressure upon the Government. From this point onward the British check upon the three Autocrats weakened steadily.

Throughout the negotiations the situation

* In the House of Commons Mr. Curzon made the almost Hybernian boast that "at every port" (in Crete) "where ships had been stationed, the insurrection had been nipped in the bud when it was on the verge of breaking out."

in the island was one of complete anarchy. Consul Biliotti described it as "the most serious I have witnessed since I have been in Crete. The authority of the local functionaries," he added, "is completely lost. The Government is in the hands of the mob." The Mussulmans attacked the Convent of Anopolis, and murdered twenty-nine inmates. Next day they pillaged and set fire to three villages. On August 14th the old Reform Committee was replaced by a Revolutionary Committee, advocating union with Greece. On the same day Consul Biliotti reported the destruction of ten villages and monasteries. According to Greek Government advices, five churches were profaned and pillaged; three priests, three women, and three children were murdered, a woman and two babies wounded; a priest had his nose and ears mutilated, and was then burned alive on a fire composed of images; a woman was murdered after her husband and two children

had been killed at her feet. What have the fine distinctions of Whitehall to do with a situation like this? The new scheme of reforms, elaborated by the Ambassadors at Constantinople, accepted with some modifications by the Sultan on August 25th, but never carried out, was a mockery of the island's needs. It is true the Christian Deputies and the Greek people thanked the Powers for this empty boon; and Lord Salisbury perhaps thought his policy justified when, after almost interminable negotiations, he managed to set up the precious police force whose history will be given on a later page. Let the sequel show once more the worth of paper concessions under the seal of Turkish "integrity"! The recapitulation of these everlasting failures, every one of which would have been saved by a strong lead in British policy, is weary work. Lord Salisbury has been praised, and with justice, for his rejection of the blockade proposal of 1896. But

of what use to veto a wrong one year and join in it the next? "There was a difference." Truly—one, and only one difference. A Mother Country, to whose patience Lord Salisbury had testified, could bear the strain no longer, but must needs try if she could not do the simple deed which Great Britain lacked the courage to attempt. Was this a crime? The hearts of the free peoples will answer. There are crises in history when it is better to blunder strongly than to totter in the path of rectitude. In the summer of 1896 Lord Salisbury could have had an "even-handed" blockade, levelled against Greeks and Turks equally, for the asking. But he would have done better to accede at once even to the Austrian proposal, whose injustice he so well exposed but which, after all, was only directed against secret bands of Greek volunteers, than to refuse this milder measure and then to drift into a campaign which challenged the honour of the whole

Greek nation, and which resulted in the ruin of Crete, and a disastrous continental war. Lord Salisbury's will is, unhappily, inferior to his intellect. One strong man would have saved the West from all this coil of shame. The Tsar Nicholas knew what he was saying when he cried, "No more Mazzinis, no more Kossuths!" But that was in a day when England, as well as Italy and Hungary, had her hero-leaders. "How are the mighty fallen!"

VII.

"In his opinion the blame lies entirely with the Turks, and it will be impossible for Greece to stand aloof if acts of savagery take place. Under such circumstances she would probably have much European sympathy."

COUNT GOLUCHOWSKI (1896).

"We have then before us, it is literally true, a David facing six Goliaths."

MR. GLADSTONE (1897).

"A maiden vilified, persecuted, tortured, invokes her mother's assistance. She hastens to the rescue of her child, prepared to face all dangers; but others step in; they are Christian men who warn her not to approach the victim, under the pretext that *they* will see to her rescue. In vain does the mother protest her natural and moral obligations. She is peremptorily ordered to stand aside while her daughter is slaughtered."—The Archimandrite, DR. PARASCHIS, at the Greek Church, Bayswater.

"A meteor wert thou crossing a dark night:
Yet shall thy name, conspicuous and sublime,
Stand in the spacious firmament of time,
Fixed as a star."

WORDSWORTH.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMING OF THE GREEKS.

A Climax.—Greece intervenes.—The Gendarmerie as "Ridiculus Mus."—Flight of the Governor-General.—Vassos, His "Raid."

It is immediately after the period covered by the Cretan Blue Book, "Turkey, No. 8, 1897"—that is to say, during the last days of 1896, while the Ambassadors were still vainly trying to agree about, and to persuade the Porte to accept, a partially foreign gendarmerie—that the last and worst volcanic outburst began, the rage and fear of the more unruly Mohammedans, in face of the probability of concessions to the Christians, being the only cause yet revealed. On January 3rd, 1897, simultaneous attacks by parties of armed men were made in three places upon the Christians, several of whom were killed. A body of

Christians starting out from Canea with a view to reprisals was induced to disperse by the Greek Consul-General, acting at the request of the Consular body and the Governor-General. Throughout January things became steadily worse; and on the 25th part of Canea was burned down. On the 31st it was reported that bands of Mohammedans were daily raiding the Christian villages in the neighbourhood of Candia. On February 1st British ships were summoned, and two days later a mixed foreign fleet rode at anchor off Canea. "Six villages are reported to have been burned in the last few days" said the *Times* correspondent. The Turkish officials confessed their complete inability to restore order; panic reigned in Canea; the bells of the churches rang out wild alarm, houses and shops were closed, and parties of both creed made anarchy in the streets within gun-shot of the fleet which was supposed to represent the orderly and peaceful proclivities of the Concert

of Europe. Outside the town Bashi-Bazouks set fire to that old scene of their depredations, the large village of Galata, provoking a conflict with a large body of Christians which continued through the day. Several other villages were also fired. At Halepa the Turkish barracks were attacked. In Canea, the Christian Judge Markoulis and a Turkish sergeant were murdered, and around Candia acute panic prevailed. A memorial was presented on the 3rd to the Consuls, in which the Bishop of Kydonia, the Christian members of the Administrative Council, and some notables, denounced the provocative attitude of the Turks, asked the Powers to take immediate and decisive measures to complete the application of the new reforms, and threatened that otherwise they would use every effort to bring about the union of Crete with Greece. Alas! "otherwise" is the inveterate way of the Concert.

The last sands of the eleventh hour were

now running out, and yet a strong stroke from a firm hand might have saved the situation. The King and Government still held the people of Greece in hand, though with failing grasp. On February 4th, M. Delyannis, in the Chamber, said that the duty of introducing reforms in Crete had been undertaken by the Powers, and so Greece could not interfere officially; but that if their hopes were not fulfilled a new situation would arise. While the Greek Premier was speaking, the new situation he feared was being inaugurated in the streets of Canea by "indiscriminate firing, begun by the Turkish soldiers from the battlements."* Again a large part of the town was burned down, and such of the Christian inhabitants as were not able to take refuge on board the foreign warships barricaded themselves in their dwellings. Elsewhere fighting was going on continuously. The Consuls described the situation as "hopelessly

* *Times* telegrams.

compromised," which was, we may suppose, as adequate an expression of the bald truth as the official vocabulary allows. Still the ignoble Six sat idle in their Chancellories. Why not? Why should they worry about mere civil war, mere pillage, murder, arson, the ruin of a disorderly people, so long as these were bounded by and subjected to the one supreme consideration of "the integrity of the Ottoman Empire"? It was not the first time the great ones of the earth had forgotten the possibility of some little David turning up at the critical moment to challenge the great Goliath. The idea of any of the petty nations outside the Six furnishing a band of resolute souls who would go to death rather than bow the knee to Baal was too wild for the strictly "correct" priesthood of continental autocracy. One wonders that the mere name of Greece did not suggest any such thought; but the managers of the Concert have all along shown themselves to be as ignorant of the nature and

reality of classical tradition as of the lessons of history and the principles of international right. At last the long patience of Athens was broken. Twenty-four hours after his non-intervention speech, M. Delyannis announced that two warships had been ordered to leave for Canea immediately.

This was, indeed, but a preliminary step, designed for the protection of Greek subjects and the native Christians. The warning spurred the "Powers" into a momentary spasm of activity. They positively constituted three companies of gendarmes. This may seem to the mere Englishman rather like a pill to cure an earthquake; but let us recall the difficulties of Concerted pill-making. All through the autumn and winter the Ministers, Ambassadors, Admirals, and Consuls of the holy Six had been engaged upon this question of a reformed Cretan gendarmerie. In September Sir A. Biliotti had urged its immediate importance. At the end of October a com-

mission on the subject had begun to meet, and on December 10th it had succeeded in drawing up the basis of a scheme of re-organisation. Then followed a long wrangle with the Sultan, who, of course, objected to his police being diluted by a foreign element. At the end of the year M. de Nelidoff was reported to have spoken and written very sternly to the "Shadow of God" on the subject, but without effect. On January 5th, 1897, the Ambassadors presented a fresh Note. On the 13th, Said Pasha begged them to change their minds. They refused, with more vague threats. The next day the Sultan gave way—that is to say, he fell back, precisely as he had done in Constantinople and in Armenia, upon his own perfect method of negativing all reform schemes. The anarchy in Crete immediately followed; and "it is indubitable," the *Times* correspondent in Constantinople telegraphed on February 9th, "that the situation in Crete has been created by the intrigues of Mahmud

Djellaleddin and of Izzet, who had the Sultan's order to work up an agitation against the enlistment of foreigners in the Cretan gendarmerie."* But even now the concoction of this precious pill was not completed. On January 23rd it was announced that the Sultan would not accept a British commanding officer. Russia and France also had objections to Major Bor. Not till the 30th did they give way; and, as we have seen, not till February 9th, when only a small army could have restored order in the island, did the *mons parturiens* actually produce its *ridiculus mus*. The sequel to this most characteristic episode is even more instructive. On March 2nd the

* Simultaneously the *Times* Athens correspondent wired in the like sense, and on February 28th the Vienna correspondent of the same paper said it was clear that "the full responsibility for the sanguinary events in Crete rests with the Sultan and the *Camarilla*." In Macedonia the leading Mohammedan party chiefs had been similarly instructed to frustrate all reforms. The *Daily News* Constantinople correspondent also telegraphed (March 9th): "Lord Salisbury and M. Hanotaux have proofs in their hands that the disturbances in Crete were incited or encouraged in Constantinople to prevent the execution of reforms."

older gendarmerie mutinied and killed their officers. They were disarmed and disbanded by the Admirals. Six days later the new force also was disbanded. The poor little mouse succumbed; the pill went to powder —but powder with a new explosive quality in it. Once more the Concert shivered, stark naked, under the cold laughter of the world.

While the Admirals and Consuls were first mustering the little police force which was thus to melt away within a month, every town in the island was the scene of bloody civil strife. In several places the Mohammedans got the worst of the fighting, but generally the best of the plunder. At least one Turkish block-house was already effectively besieged. Canea was again fired, and several neighbouring villages were in flames. Many Christian families had taken refuge on the warships, and these and thousands from the ports direct were shipped to Greece, there to feed, with the dumb eloquence of their utter despair,

the flames of a mother-country's indignation. Rumour said that there had been a foul massacre of Mussulmans at Sitia;* certainly a number of neighbouring villages were burned down. On the other side, we read that "the entire Mohammedan population of Malevisi, Temenos, Pyrgiotissa, and Monofatsi have entered Candia, attacking and wounding the Christians in the streets, and pillaging the shops and houses. The soldiers are stated to have taken part in the plundering." At Candia, too, a Mussulman mob attacked the arsenal, and seized two thousand rifles.† The resignation of Georgi Pasha, the Governor-General, and his flight to the Greek Consulate, where he was protected until he left the island by armed Christians, Monte-

---

The full truth as to this has not transpired. On February 23rd Mr. Curzon said: "there has been no confirmation of the alleged massacre." On March 9th, however, Reuter's agent at Canea telegraphed that the report was confirmed. The writer has not been able to discover any details.

† Mr. Curzon.

negrin gendarmes, and a force of Greek marines from the Greek ironclad *Hydra*,* marked the climax of the disorders. Only the Concert could remain undisturbed in face of these events. The insurgents, for their part, declared the union of the island with Greece. The Sultan made "strong representations to the Powers concerning the condition to which *their* intervention and the adoption of *their* measures (!) have brought Cretan affairs," and threatened that "failing effectual measures on their part the Porte will take its own."† This menace was immediately followed by an announcement that a Turkish torpedo-boat had left the Dardanelles, and that troops for Crete had embarked at Salonica. Their hand thus forced, the Greek Government had really no alternative; it was, as every observer of authority testifies, simply a question between obedience to the demand

* *Times* Athens Correspondent.
† *Times* Constantinople Correspondent.

of humanity and patriotism—and revolution.* On the night of Georgi Pasha's flight and the embarkation of fresh Turkish troops—the night of February 10th—a Greek torpedo-boat flotilla under Prince George left the Piræus with sealed orders, "amid scenes of popular enthusiasm which baffle description." On the following day the Greek Government despatched a Circular Note to the Powers announcing that the landing of more Turkish troops in Crete (which, by the way, would have been a breach of the chief provision of the August Convention, and a plain snub to the Powers, to say nothing of its more serious dangers) would be resisted by every

* M. de Blowitz, echoing well-informed opinion in Paris, thus described King George's record: "No sovereign has, since his accession, displayed a more balanced mind or a more pacific temper. King George is the monarch of peace, *par excellence*. During the thirty years of his reign he has had to face still more violent movements, but has managed to hold out against all excesses, and to keep within measure and pacific proportions the outburst of Pan-Hellenism."—*Times*, February 13th, 1897. The Vienna correspondent of the same journal says: "Neither the King nor his Government is responsible for the present display of national

possible means; tracing the disorders back to Turkish misrule, and endorsing the Cretan demand for union with Greece. On the same day the Greek vessels were warned not to take hostile action against the Turks. On February 13th Colonel Vassos, Aide-de-Camp to King George, was sent with instructions to "occupy the island, and re-establish order and peace"; and on the 15th he landed, without interference, with 1,500 men, at Kolimbari, near Canea, where 2,000 Cretans at once joined him. He promptly issued a proclamation of union to the Kingdom, promising to respect the honour, life, property, and religious convictions of the

excitement. It is not an artificial movement, nor does it form part of the foreign policy of Greece. It is, to all intents and purposes, a popular demonstration." (February 10th, 1897.) As early as July 23rd the British Ambassador in Athens had written thus positively: "The Greek Government, more than any previous Greek Government under similar circumstances, have fulfilled their duties of neutrality with considerable difficulty to themselves. Indeed, I do not think they could go further; and it would indeed be a serious crisis for Greece were they 'now driven from office by the popular fury.'"

islanders. Count Goluchowski's warning of nine months before was justified: "It will be impossible for Greece to stand aloof if acts of savagery take place in the island." Unhappily the prophet had deserted his own prophecy, and was now busy with his fellow-Chancellors choking the "European sympathy" which he had promised to the gallant little Kingdom.

It will now be clear that the attempt to draw a parallel between the expeditions of Prince George and Colonel Vassos and the "raid" of Dr. Jameson fails egregiously. To make any real analogy we should have to suppose that the Transvaal had for many years been the scene of anarchy and bloodshed; that its President had been guilty of the most monstrous oppression of the Outlander population; that there was, in fact, no Outlander population to oppress (since it is in their native land that the Cretans have suffered); that for years the adjoining

British territory had been subject to an inflow of refugees of kindred, blood, faith, and aspirations; that such inflow had caused a constant strain, not on the sentiment only, but also on the material resources of the said British territory;* that, for years before, President Krüger had been protected in this hypothetical career of crime by a Concert of Six Powers, of whom Great Britain was not one, from which, indeed, along with some boons, Great Britain had received serious injury in the past; that patience had been maintained, and every resource of statecraft tried to secure reforms, not for weeks and months only, but for years before, with no success; that Dr. Jameson went not to create

* On February 24th, Mr. Norman telegraphed from Athens that there were over 13,000 Cretan refugees in Greece, 90 per cent. being women and children. Beside private charity, the Government had had to spend one and a half million drachmas in relief. An artist-correspondent of the *Illustrated London News* depicts a relief depôt in Athens—one of a number which supplied a daily meal to seven or eight thousand Cretan refugees in the capital, and to about five thousand in Piræus.

a revolution, but to give order to a movement long established, and to set up law among a population riven by long and bitter feuds. Then, as regards the result—a not unimportant point in judging of any revolution—we would have to suppose that Dr. Jameson was received with open arms by the larger half of the population of the Transvaal; that he easily occupied the whole country with the exception of a few towns, which were held, not by the Dutch rulers, but by their international protectors; and finally (to pass over bombardments and other cruel aggravations of the original evil), that his whole enterprise was subjected, not to the open judicial processes of the Courts of his own country, but to the decrees of an irresponsible junta, in whose secret councils three autocrats held a complete predominance, and whose inglorious failures had been the provoking cause of his own brave venture. If any of these circumstances had really, could have, existed in South Africa, there

is no doubt at all what the sentiment of the Anglo-Saxon people in every clime would have been; there can be no doubt that they would have risen to a man, whether it had Seven or seventy-seven Against Thebes. The catalogue of distinctions we have given is not exhaustive. There are differences of motive, all to the credit of the Greek; there are further results—the continuance of civil strife in Crete, and a continental war which will prove as disastrous to civilisation as it has proved to the Greek people. We need not press the matter further. It is just the difference between the Golden Rule and the Rule of Gold. The poets hold the touchstone of truth at these turning points of world-history; and, wild as Rhodesian eulogy has been, we do not know that Dr. Jim has yet been pictured as Perseus to any Andromeda of the Johannesburg saloons.

VIII.

"Such a blockade would, in effect, place Great Britain in the position of an ally of the Sultan in the task of repressing the insurrection of his Christian subjects. . . . If successful, it would hardly be contended that the Powers were not, in some degree, responsible for any use the Sultan made of that success. . . . The objection would be accentuated by the fact that they would be intervening in opposition to Christian insurgents who had very solid grievances to complain of. . . . It was not an even-handed proceeding to give the Sultan the assistance of the ships, while giving the Cretans the assistance of a Commission which could only interfere by representations. . . . It was deeds on one side and mere words on the other."

THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY (*July-August*, 1896).

"England has been placed before the world in a position unworthy of her present, and untrue to the noble traditions of her people. The greater part of the English people hear from far that verdict now, and feel its justice. Men and women are ashamed as they go to their business, as they walk the roads, as they sit at home. No soldier, no sailor, has fought with any joyousness, any conviction in this quarrel. Even those who care for nothing but the pursuit of wealth have been made uneasy, like men afflicted with an obscure disease. As to the working men of England, their voice has, with scarcely a single contradiction, repudiated the disgrace of the country. The soul of the nation feels equal shame, indignation, and revolt."

STOPFORD A. BROOKE (*April*, 1897).

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

The Cretan Demand for Union.—The Blockade.—Insurgent Victories.—First Bombardment.—The Quality of Mercy.—Autonomy at the Cannon's Mouth.

THERE is, and was, no room for doubt as to the feeling of the great majority of the islanders about the abortive autonomy proclamation; but we may pause momentarily to note some of the further occasions on which it was clearly expressed. On March 22nd, 1897, in the House of Commons, Mr. Curzon said: "We have never heard that the insurgent chiefs at Akrotiri, in their interview with the Admirals, declared themselves satisfied with autonomy." In reporting an interview on March 19th, H.M. Consul mentions that the insurgents declared that "nothing but annexation to Greece would satisfy them." A week

later the *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent, having been among the Cretans in disguise, related some remarkable incidents* to show the positiveness of their demand for union, and added that, in reading to them the autonomy proclamation, Admiral Canivaro said "that he and his colleagues would gladly accord the annexation, as the simplest and most natural solution of the Cretan question, but that the European Powers, for their own reasons, refused to do so. Therefore he urged us to accept autonomy, not as final, but as a phase which would quickly and surely lead to annexation." On April 7th the same correspondent stated that out

* Some were angry, others contemptuous, in their refusal of autonomy. One "handsome man, armed, but dressed in clerical garb," shouting, "You, sir, shall see what value we Cretans set upon our lives," "seized a long white-handled dagger from one of the bystanders' belts, and one second later would have cut his own throat from ear to ear" had his hand not been caught in the nick of time. At another place a Cretan, asked what would happen when supplies gave out, pulled a handful of grass, ate it, and replied, "That is what we will do." See also Dr. Dillon in the *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1897.

of 40,000 Cretans who had signed replies to the proclamation not one would hear of autonomy. On the following day the Consuls informed the Admirals that it was of no use their going out to parley with the insurgents, as they had nothing new to offer them, and on May 2nd, when the tide of war had already turned against Greece, and the recall of Colonel Vassos had become necessary, the *Times* correspondent at Canea reported that "the insurgents have absolutely no confidence in the intentions of Europe, and the Greek party among them have all the power." The next day the Admirals had an interview with the insurgent leaders, who "cut the discussion short, and repeated that their motto remained 'annexation or death.'" So long as it was possible Greece maintained a no less firm attitude. The Note of the Powers, recognising that the reform scheme of August 25th, 1895, "no longer corresponds to the situation," refusing annexation,

and promising autonomy, was delivered on March 2nd. Turkey was informed that its troops should be concentrated in the towns then occupied by the Powers. Greece, on the other hand, was summoned to withdraw her ships and troops within six days. "In case of refusal, the Great Powers have arrived at the irrevocable decision not to shrink from any measure of compulsion." Mr. Balfour said this was not an ultimatum, and claimed that the difference between the two Notes was "justified by the fact that the Greeks were notoriously acting in defiance of or against the wishes of the Powers, whilst Turkey was purely on the defensive, and has shown no desire to resist the policy of the Powers"! Turkey was acting "purely on the defensive" when she organised massacres and provoked civil war! Perseus had daredt o "defy" the eagles—vultures rather—who waited for their share of the dragon's meal. Such is history as the Turkophiles read it. A telegram from

one hundred Members of Parliament to the King of Greece showed that not quite all Europe had bowed the knee; but as an effective force Democracy was dumb and paralysed. Well, the Powers had arrived at another of their "irrevocable decisions." In the event it was not they—who did, after all, "shrink" from several "measures of compulsion"—but their Turkish allies, who were to bring Greece to her knees. This by the way. Greece could give only one reply. It came on March 9th. Reference was made to the many ties between Greece and Crete; the failure of any autonomy scheme was prophesied, and the Powers were begged, for the sake of humanity and order, not to insist on the recall of the Greek troops, at least as long as any Turkish troops remained. The Greek fleet, however, might be withdrawn if the Powers would prevent the landing of Ottoman reinforcements. At the same time it was intimated that the Greek Government was willing to

recognise the temporary suzerainty of the Sultan pending a *plébiscite*, and to place its forces in the island under the command of any military representative of the Powers senior in rank to Colonel Vassos, for the restoration of order. Surely a more rational proposition could not have been made. Three days later Lord Salisbury announced that instructions had been given to the Admirals for the blockade of Crete. Greece was notified that the blockade would begin on March 21st. "Since an Austrian gunboat has just sunk a Greek sailing vessel conveying provisions, it is difficult to understand the difference between the present state and that which commences on Sunday," said one correspondent. There was, indeed, little or no difference. The significance of the blockade lay not in the direction of its consequences, but in the direction of its cause. It marked definitively the defeat of all liberal and moderate influences in the

counsels of the Concert, the victory of jealousy and brute force, the opening of a campaign of naked revenge against the little island and the little kingdom which had dared to set up their own aspirations against the designs of Continental autocracy.

If the representatives of the Powers had been able to fulfil their promises, to realise their intention of giving the island some approach to real autonomy, in the preceding autumn, the insurgents would have been "dished," the demand for Union would have been greatly weakened, if not extinguished. Instead, the lazy ineptitude of the Concert, intent only on cajoling its old ally of Yildiz, conspired with the last outburst of Moslem fanaticism to frustrate all mild benevolence. Civilisation, as we know it, is founded on the policeman. The men who cannot give order and peace cannot give autonomy; the men who cannot establish a police force—even though they have all the armies and navies

of Europe at their back—cannot carry out any scheme of reforms, small or large, and have no moral right to stand in the way of those who can. So at least the Cretans argued from the beginning, and with ever-growing conviction as the multiform futility of the Admirals was gradually unrolled. So far as the Admirals personally are concerned, they deserve only commiseration. Well might they complain of the "cursed spite" which deputed them to set this mischief right. That they were always "late, late, too late" in doing the proper thing and prompt only in doing the wrong one was more their misfortune than their fault. But the "Cabinet of Europe" must be judged by its fruits, like other institutions; and it may be questioned whether history shows a tragedy of errors so complete, so inexcusable, or so disastrous, as was now to be enacted upon this tiny stage under the direction of the six most powerful rulers of the modern world.

To have prevented the landing of Colonel Vassos would not have solved the Cretan question, but it would at least have given an appearance of consistency and intelligence to the action of the foreign representatives, who, it is clear, should either have kept him out, or, having let him in under their very noses, should have bowed to the accomplished fact of a military occupation by the most interested and nearly related Power—admirable sequel to ages of conflict. They took neither of these courses, but, having permitted the Greek occupation, they now for the first time put Canea under the control of a mixed force of marines, called upon the insurgents who surrounded it to lay down their arms and cease hostilities, and upon the Greeks to withdraw. Of course the Cretans and their new allies scoffed at this summons. During the next few days the area subject to their provisional government was rapidly enlarged. On February 16th they captured the fort of

Aghia, taking a large number of Turkish soldiers and other Mussulmans prisoners; and on the 20th, after a pitched battle with Turkish troops in the plain near Livadia, they took Fort Bukolies and several hundred prisoners more. This victory was the prelude to the first of those lamentable incidents which definitively ranged Great Britain along with the other five Powers in the position which in the previous year had seemed so odious and impossible to the British Premier —that of "an ally of the Sultan in the task of repressing the insurrection of his Christian subjects," of "intervening in opposition to Christian insurgents who had very solid grievances to complain of," "of restoring the authority of the Sultan when they had at their disposal no means of insuring that the restored authority would be exerted with moderation and justice." On February 12th

* Even the still-born autonomy proclamation had not yet been concocted.

it had been agreed* between the Consuls and the insurgent leaders—who from the beginning adopted a most "correct" attitude towards the representatives of the Powers, directing their attacks only against the Turkish troops whose withdrawal would at any time have led direct to a solution of the problem—that Halepa should be regarded as neutral territory, and that a day's notice should be given of any intention to attack Canea. The fighting on the 20th took place near the neutral line, and it was renewed on the following morning. The Cretans declared that the Turks provoked the engagement, sallying out either from Canea, or a fort just above, against them. However this be, at

* This statement is made in the protests of the insurgent leaders to the Admirals and to the peoples of Europe, in the reports of Colonel Vassos and Commander Reineck to the Greek Government, and in some newspaper telegrams, especially those of Mr. Norman; who, on the authority of the King of Greece, added the allegation that foreign marines were present in the fort from which the Turkish troops sallied, and to which they returned; and that the Turkish Commander paid a visit to one of the foreign battleships immediately beforehand. On the other hand, Consul Biliotti telegraphed

four o'clock in the afternoon the Admirals, after a conference, decided to interpose, and shortly afterwards a few shells were thrown, as a preliminary, at the insurgent position on the hills of Akrotiri. The fusillade continuing, the foreign warships, ranged in line from east to west of the bay, commenced an effective bombardment, the British, German, Austrian, and Russian vessels firing in turn. In less than half an hour the Cretans were seen to be retiring, and the signal was given to cease fire. "The shrapnel shells twisting

(February 26th): "Statement of newspaper correspondent that Turks fired shells on village of Korakian Akrotiri without provocation disagrees with information of Colonel Chermside and British Consul." On March 2nd Mr. Curzon read a telegram from the British Admiral, who said "the insurgents commenced a forward movement without provocation." Mr. Curzon also said: "It cannot be said that a state of war exists. . . . We have received no official information of any sally of the Turkish troops from Canea. . . . So far as we can gather, the position taken up by the insurgents on the heights commanding the town must have been between one and two miles from the walls of the latter." With this last sentence may be read the words of the *Chronicle* Commissioner: "It is preposterous to suggest that the Cretans menaced the flags of the Powers. They were never within several miles of the flags."

on the hill-top made a very pretty display, but the men's hearts were not in the job," says one Correspondent.* While the Cretans were picking up their dead and wounded, "the Turks at the nearest outposts opened a brisk fire, to which the Cretans, disheartened by the fire of the warships, did not reply."† It was afterwards reported that fifteen Christians and three nuns of the Convent of the Prophet Elias had been wounded. The Greek warship *Hydra* landed surgeons, and obtained permission to take the wounded on board. In Athens the bombardment, which was described as a "Navarino reversed," made a great sensation; and the Greek Government at once protested to the Powers against an outrage "which rivals those scenes of cruelty that have stirred the consciences of civilised peoples."

The consequences of the bombardment

* *Globe* Canea Correspondent.
† *Times* Canea Correspondent.

were the usual consequences of encouraging the Turk as a fighting animal. "The encouraging effect of Sunday's memorable event upon the Turks," the *Times* Correspondent telegraphed on the following day, "is already visible," for "yesterday and to-day, both on the Suda and on the Galata side of Akrotiri, the Turkish cannon were busily firing upon the Christians, who have not replied, fearing lest they should be shelled by the foreign warships. The outposts of the Greek army in camp at Platania were fired upon by the Turks repeatedly, but did not return the fire." On the same day news was received that the Greek regular troops had saved the lives of the Mussulman prisoners at Kisamo Kasteli —one of a number of unrequited acts of mercy—and that a small Greek steamer, bringing provisions and tents for Colonel Vassos, had been arrested and its engines dismantled by a British torpedo-boat. On the 23rd, the Greek ship *Thessalia* was

prevented from landing stores, and the Greek Consul was informed that communication by sea with Platania was cut off. How bombardments can take place without a "state of war," or ships be seized and disabled without a blockade being declared, the lawyers of the Concert have never attempted to explain. The truth is, that the whole situation in Crete was a complex of illegalities—if such a thing as international law really exists. Mr. Goschen explained* that warships had been sent to the coast towns "not from philo-Turkish propensities," but because the Turks were now in a majority there, and to protect the Christian minority. This was not everywhere the case. At Selinos, for instance, a large number of Mussulmans were besieged —a fact which helped to stir the fanaticism of their compatriots in Canea. On February 24th the Palace there was fired, and the

* Speech at City Carlton Club, February 24th, 1897.

Benghazi Arabs threatened to burn down the whole town.* The looting of the ruins was only prevented by the foreign Bluejackets. The foreign Vice-Consuls at Retimo sent the following significant message: "The prolongation of the present situation would entail grave consequences. *The Turks* desire the re-establishment of order, and *declare that they are ready to accept annexation by Greece.*" Some Turks encamped before Canea having fired upon the Christians, the latter raised the white flag, in order to show the Admirals, as the telegrams plaintively put it, that they were not the aggressors. These poor Admirals! How bewildered they must have been before they got their instructions!

But now the Concert had been delivered of another mouse. On February 25th Lord Salisbury communicated to the House of Lords the following declaration of policy which he believed to be in consonance with

* Reuter, Canea.

the views of the Allies: "Firstly, that the establishment of an administrative autonomy in Crete is, in their judgment, a necessary condition of the termination of international occupation; secondly, that, subject to the above condition, Crete ought, in their judgment, to remain a portion of the Turkish Empire; thirdly, that Turkey and Greece should be informed by the Powers of this resolution; fourthly, that if either Turkey or Greece persistently refuse, when required, to withdraw their naval and military forces from the island, the Powers should impose their decision by force, if necessary, upon the State so refusing." He added: "I wish to draw attention to the words 'when required.' It does not follow, certainly in the case of Turkey, that all the troops should be withdrawn immediately. The mere question of police would prevent such a result; but, on the other hand, it is evident that *the withdrawal of the Turkish troops is a necessary*

condition of autonomy. Therefore the Turkish troops will ultimately have to be withdrawn so far as they have been kept at Samos—I am not anticipating the judgment of the Powers—and for many years in the case of Servia, simply as an indication of sovereignty. The Greek troops, I imagine, will be required by the Powers to withdraw at an earlier day." In the House of Commons, Mr. Balfour read the same four propositions, but—to the annoyance of the Opposition—without the supplementary statement; and Mr. Curzon emphasised once more the abandonment of the position which a Tory Minister had described as that of "splendid isolation" by saying that "the British Admiral having instructions to act in concert with the other naval commanders, no separate orders can be sent him to act in independence of his colleagues."

We have already noted the extreme promptness of the Concert and its agents in doing

the wrong thing, and their extreme dilatoriness in doing the right one. On the day of Lord Salisbury's declaration of the new policy the Admirals at Canea extended their protection to the plain of Suda, and the valley between the town and Akrotiri and Halepa, and notified to the Greek and Cretan leaders that any act of hostility in sight of the warships would be repressed by force.* But it was not till three weeks later, March 17th, that the "autonomy" proclamation was posted; and even then the form of it was so vague that on the advice of the Consuls, who plainly intimated its uselessness, it was withdrawn, strengthened, and

* The Greek Minister of Marine, in the Chamber, read the following as the injunctions of the Admirals to the Greek Commodore: "The Admirals do not allow the Greek fleet to bombard the occupied fortresses and towns. They forbid any attack by Greek troops on the fortresses aforesaid, the landing of guns or of ammunition, any attack on Turkish ships by the Greek fleet, any advance of Colonel Vassos into the interior." The Greek Government's reply was that it could not force Colonel Vassos to remain inactive, and that the landing of Turkish troops would be resisted; but towns occupied by the Powers would not be attacked.

posted again on the 20th, but still without any details of the proposed new constitution. To be sure, this mattered very little—the point was long past when Home Rule would have been acceptable or could have been established. It indicates, however, the futility of the course upon which Europe was embarked, the height of the folly which had led the Powers to reject an instrument of law and peaceful order offered to them by the gallantry of the Greek people. "Autonomy" sounds very well in the carefully filtered atmosphere of the Westminster Chambers; what could it mean in the ravaged villages and mountain camps of Crete? All the embellishments of oratory and diplomacy combined cannot trick this criminal stupidity into any semblance of statecraft. The Cretans may be very misguided people, but they know the difference between stones and bread. They replied to the Admirals that all ties between Crete and the Porte are broken, and no

accommodation is any longer possible"; * and to King George † that autonomy would not pacify the island, and they would continue to struggle for union with Greece.

---

* Reuter, Canea.

† Through a deputation headed by Monsignor Denis, Bishop of Retimo (Reuter, Athens).

IX.

"It was a most unfair and most monstrous insinuation to say that the Government had taken one side as against the other, and that if they had taken one side, it had been the side of the Turks."

MR. CURZON (*February 26th*, 1897).

"We are absolutely neutral as between Christians and Mussulmans."

MR. GOSCHEN (*February 23rd*, 1897).

"When slurs, perhaps not unnaturally, are cast on Turkish soldiers and the Turkish forces, it ought to be remembered that throughout the six months in Crete these Turkish soldiers have acted with exemplary obedience to command."

MR. CURZON (*March 2nd*, 1897).

"When I am here (in Parliament) I hear of nothing but the necessity of turning the Turkish soldiery out of Crete; but when I am at the Foreign Office I hear of nothing but the necessity of not interfering with the Turkish soldiery unnecessarily. The belief of the Powers is that the Turkish soldiery in Crete ought not to be feared for these purposes. By all accounts they have behaved exceedingly well during the crisis, and there really is no ground for the apprehension that they will disobey their officers."

THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY (*March 2nd*, 1897).

CHAPTER IX.

THE VENGEANCE OF THE POWERS.

Turkish Outrages and Greek Humanity.—The Admirals in Despair.—Malaxa Shelled.—Treachery.—"To the Strains of the Hamidieh Hymn."—The "Camperdown's" "Perfect Practice."—May-Day, and the Recall of Colonel Vassos.

In the meanwhile, in spite of outward obstacles and the bitter strife of sect and race which continued in the island, Colonel Vassos succeeded in maintaining a standard of humanity, and even of propriety, worthy of his claim as the rightful Governor. Fighting proceeded continuously, and a Turkish garrison was besieged in the Malaxa blockhouse, and all communications cut off. On March 2nd the old Turkish gendarmerie at Canea revolted, fired on their officers, and were imprisoned or dismissed; and on the 8th the new force was disbanded. On that day it was reported

that "the Turkish authorities are allowing the Mussulmans to desecrate the cemeteries of the monasteries. The coffins have been forced open and the remains thrown into the fields, the object of the marauders being to despoil the dead of jewels or other valuables that might have been buried with them. The Christian villages having been burned and pillaged, the Turks are now destroying the olive trees by hundreds. Ismail Bey, the Governor (in succession to George Berovitch Pasha), declared that it was impossible for him to prevent such acts."* Sharp fighting was now taking place daily outside Canea between the insurgents and the cordon of Turkish troops. On the 9th, Reuter's Agent telegraphed that it "was begun by the Mussulman volunteers, who advanced beyond the line of Turkish regulars," into whose ranks they fell back, so that the troops "were thus compelled to take part in the fighting." At

* Reuter's Agent at Canea.

Hierapetra the insurgents attacked a Turkish fort till an Italian cruiser opened fire upon them. On the same day the Greek Vice-Consul, the Consular staff, and all the Greek newspaper correspondents in Crete, were expelled, or "invited to leave" as Mr. Curzon preferred to put it, by the Admirals.

On March 10th the rescue of the Mussulmans besieged by the insurgents in Selinos —2,500 civilians and 600 soldiers—was completed. The credit for this splendid act of mercy lies with Colonel Vassos and the Greek allies of the insurgents, whose only condition was that none of those rescued should be re-armed or allowed to engage in fresh hostilities. The Consuls, especially the British Consul, gave the desired promise; how it was broken we shall see. "The conduct of the Cretan chiefs was unexceptionable, and they did all in their power, to the extent of risking their lives, to restrain their men; but they were unable to prevent some of

their followers from opening fire on the refugees as they were embarking. No one was killed, but a soldier and a civilian were wounded."* The evacuation of Kissamo Kasteli on March 16th left the whole of the interior of the island in the hands of the insurgents and the Greeks.* In Canea small-pox raged, and the Governor still professed himself unable to enforce sanitary regulations, or secure the public safety. Each of the Six Powers was therefore required to provide five or six hundred men to strengthen the detachments already landed. Sober and impartial observers began to despair at the lengths to which this policy was being pushed. "Before it is too late," said the *Standard* Correspondent, "I feel bound to place on record the unanimous opinion of those who know the island well, that, if the Turkish and Greek troops are withdrawn, the landing of a few thousand Europeans can have little or no effect towards

* Reuter.

facilitating a final and satisfactory settlement. . . . To restore even a semblance of order, it would be necessary to land an entire Army Corps, while to GO ON TINKERING with the situation would, at the present stage, lead inevitably to a prolongation of the existing anarchy." The *Times* Correspondent was no less positive. "At the risk of becoming wearisome by repetition," he telegraphed, "I must again insist on the urgent necessity of effecting the removal of the Turkish troops from Crete at the earliest possible moment. Nothing else will induce the islanders to believe that the Powers now offer them a substantial amelioration of their condition." Finally the Admirals, themselves at their wits' end to know what to do, telegraphed to the Ambassadors at Constantinople (March 24th) "that it is becoming every day more evident that *the continuance of Turkish authority in Crete is an impossibility, and recommending that* a European

Governor-General be appointed, and *the Turkish troops withdrawn.*"* "These recommendations," said Mr. Curzon, "have the entire support of Her Majesty's Government. They are at the present moment under the consideration of the Powers."† He added that the withdrawal of troops was being still urged upon the Turkish Government. It says much for the state of humiliating impotence to which England had reduced herself that, even after this public statement, no concession was obtained on either of these vital points.

Thus thwarted by their masters, the Admirals fell back upon the policy of brute force. On March 25th the insurgents captured the

---

Reuter, Constantinople.

† Mr. Curzon also gave the following luminous explanation of the legal situation: "No state of war exists between Great Britain and either Greece or Turkey. The blockade of Crete is understood by Her Majesty's Government to be in the nature of a measure of police enforced (with the consent of the Sovereign power) by the Admirals who have control of the coast, with the object of preventing further fighting in the island."

Malaxa blockhouse, to which they laid siege for some days. The first of the attacking party to enter the fortress was Manos, a young Oxford graduate, and he and several others made it their business to secure the safety of the forty-three prisoners. "As the Christians were congratulating themselves, shells from the European warships drove most of the insurgents to shelter. One heavy shell passed clean through the blockhouse, killing one Christian and two Turks. The blockhouse was at this time full of Christians, besides the prisoners. Several shells fell in and around the village of Kontopulo, one even reaching Kampos. The sudden bombardment is utterly inexplicable to both Greeks and insurgents."* Desperate fighting took place between the insurgents and the Turkish troops who had come out to relieve the blockhouse. The insurgent attack had begun at 6 A.M.; the Turkish men-of-war opened fire at

* *Times* Correspondent.

8 A.M. The bombardment by the European warships took place at 3.15 P.M., and lasted ten minutes. The insurgents also attacked a fresh detachment of Turkish troops and the Turkish cordon at Halepa. The Turkish warships again shelled them in the evening.* The Admirals gave as their reason for the bombardment that the insurgents had been warned not to attack the blockhouse, which commanded Suda arsenal.† In course of a protest to the Admirals Colonel Vassos recalled the promise of the representatives of the Powers, reduced to writing by the British Consul, that the Mussulmans liberated at Kandamos should be disarmed, and thenceforth prevented from harming the Cretans. Yet, "on March 25th, the Mussulman authorities of Canea distributed arms to those very Moslems, including boys of fifteen, and the next day permitted them to sally forth in sight of every one in order to begin the

* Reuter, Canea. † Mr. Curzon.

work of massacring their Christian fellow-countrymen. Where then," the protest went on to ask, "is Europe's solemn promise? Where is the impartiality of Europe's representatives? Where is that elementary humanity which we have a right to expect even from those who follow the profession of arms?" Echo answers, Where? But this treachery was mild compared with that which happened a few days later. On March 29th the Russian Consul at Retimo invited the leaders of the insurgents to come and hold a parley. "A rendezvous was appointed at the village of Koube, but when the chiefs arrived they were fired upon by the Turkish pickets. Believing that they had been led into an ambush, they at once retreated, declaring that in future they could entertain no solution but union with Greece."* "Although carrying a white flag, the Christian deputation were fired upon by Turkish troops from their

* Reuter.

entrenchments. The Christians abstained from firing, but, as the Turks continued, 200 insurgents came down, and fighting continued till evening."*

It might be supposed that incidents like this, to say nothing of the general hopelessness of the situation and the now imminent danger of continental war, would have damped the faith of the Concert and its agents in their Turkish allies. Not at all. On March 26th the recently arrived Seaforth Highlanders were inspected on parade at Candia by the Turkish Governor. The scene was an edifying one. "While waiting for the Turkish military band, which was to play the regiment up to the barracks, the pipers delighted the crowd by performing lively airs. On their arrival at the barracks the Highlanders were drawn up on one side of the square and the Turkish troops on the other, with a group of officers, including the Governor,

* Mr. Curzon, speaking from report of British Consul.

Colonel Chermside, and Sir A. Biliotti in the centre. Colonel Chermside then addressed the Governor in Turkish, thanking him cordially for the reception given to the Highlanders, *and stating that the occupation of the town was only temporary.* The Governor replied in appropriate terms, and the Turkish troops marched away *to the strains of the Hamidieh hymn* played by the Highlanders' band."* Questioned as to this curious and suggestive incident, Mr. Curzon said: "I see nothing improper in a friendly reception being given to the international troops by the garrison of a town which they have come to protect, simply because that garrison happens to be composed of Turks." Well, tastes differ; and Mr. Curzon shall have the last word on the point. But we are not surprised to learn that at this time "the whole recent conduct of the Powers" was "quite inexplicable to

* *Standard* Correspondent.

European civilians in Crete."* The wonder continued to deepen. On March 27th it was reported: "Harodia, near Hagia Triada, was burnt this morning by Mohammedans; part of the village of Perivolia, close to Canea, was also burned last night by Mohammedans, and Turkish animals are feeding among the newly-sprouting vines of the Christians. The Christian Church of St. John, near the public garden here (Canea), has just been desecrated. All this has been done under the eyes of the Powers. *The Mohammedans think that, now that they have European backing, they can do what they like.*"*

On the same afternoon the Admirals again shelled the Cretan positions. On the 30th and 31st there was a further and much more serious bombardment. On the evening of the 30th the Cretans advanced, and occupied the ridge south of Suda Bay, including two small blockhouses. The Russian and Austrian

* *Times* Canea Correspondent.

warships and H.M.S. *Camperdown* shelled them, the last named firing two shells from her 67-ton guns. On the following morning "there was considerable firing from the ships, the *Camperdown* firing four shells from her barbette guns. The Christians retired quickly along the ridge towards the west, the Turks following, and planting flags for a mile and a half east of Malaxa. The Turkish soldiers continued firing on the insurgents. In the afternoon heavy firing took place, the Christians evidently trying to retake the position."* According to another witness, an hour before the foreign men-of-war fired, the Turkish frigate shelled the insurgents freely, though without much effect. Notwithstanding a heavy cannonade from the foreign ships, taking turn, the insurgents held their ground, even throwing out skirmishers, and driving back the Turkish outposts, though compelled to abandon their principal position behind a

* *Times* Canea Correspondent.

stone wall. After half or three-quarters of an hour H.M.S. *Camperdown* began firing 6-inch shells, some of which struck the monastery; but the insurgents still kept up a heavy fire. Then "a terrific crash shook the air, followed by a hissing and groaning overhead, and by an explosion at the head of the ravine. The din beggars description, being multiplied a hundredfold by the mountains on every side, which sent back a splitting echo. "The *Camperdown*, at a range of 6,400 yards, had opened fire with her 13·6 guns." "The effect was instantaneous, three out of four of the percussion shells bursting right in the midst of the insurgents, and causing them to run helter-skelter in all directions. The practice was perfect." "The insurgents could be seen hurriedly pulling down their two flags, picking up their rifles, covering their heads with their cloaks, and disappearing over the ridge Two more of these monsters completed the rout." The

Austrian and Russian ships had also poured in shrapnels with great accuracy. The Turkish soldiers then sallied out of the forts, hoisted the Turkish flags amid great demonstrations of delight, and poured in a rolling fire on the retreating insurgents, whose grand defence excited the admiration of all who witnessed it."* "On March 30th more than eighteen shots were fired by the ships' guns. Several houses in the adjacent villages were set on fire; and, according to the insurgents, this was also entirely the work of the Turkish troops, who have planted their standard on the ruins of the Aptera Monastery, which is the property of the Patmos Convent."† If they had been at war the Admirals could hardly have done more; if they had been serving both parties alike in this wretched business, bombardment would have been an extreme measure requiring exceptional justification. But at this very

* *Standard* Correspondent. † Reuter.

moment they were less capable of preserving order even among their Turkish *protégés* in the occupied towns than they had ever been before. "The pillaging of the property of Christians apparently goes on unchecked, and bands of Bashi-Bazouks continue to make predatory excursions. The exasperation among the insurgents is increasing, and the Powers are now regarded by them as allies of the Turks. Six or eight weeks ago a force of marines from the fleet might have traversed the island without molestation, but that is not the case now. . . . Tranquillity cannot be restored unless some single Power is given a free hand to deal with the Cretans. . . . If no other State either can or will, it is clearly better to entrust Greece with the task than to allow the Cretans to continue their struggles."* Nor was this continued disorder the worst cause of complaint

* *Times* Athens Correspondent.

against the international *régime*. Two instances of Turkish treachery have already been given, but the grossest breach of honour, order, and humanity, remains to be noted. On April 3rd, "trusting to the Admirals' authorisation, the Akrotiri insurgents came down from the heights with their families and cattle, intending to avail themselves of the permission granted them to evacuate the peninsula. As soon as they reached the lower ground, fire was suddenly opened on them at a range of only 220 yards by 2,000 Bashi-Bazouks. The latter, who had come out from Canea the evening before, were largely composed of the refugee garrison from Selinos, who, in spite of the undertaking given by the Powers, had again been armed by the Governor. No measures whatever were taken by the international forces to prevent the collision, and the warships in Suda Bay did not fire a shot to check the Bashi-Bazouks in their attack, and the

order to send European detachments to disarm them came too late."* It is said that the warships were about to fire, when Major Bor and two Italian officers were seen on the hillside. They and the Military Governor persuaded the Bashi-Bazouks to return, and during the following week a number of the latter were gradually disarmed. Letters from the Mediterranean Squadron stated that medical officers who went two days afterwards to render what aid they could to the wounded insurgents were shown seven dead bodies—they had been actually dug up for inspection—with the ears and noses cut off by the Turks. Challenged to give explanations, the Governor cynically replied that "the circular of March 25th placed the whole of the police of Canea and its environs in the hands of the European commanders." We say "cynically"; but the retort was clearly justified. Another black

* Reuter, Suda.

blot lay upon the 'scutcheon of Concerted Europe. On the very day of this dastardly outrage, Colonel Vassos, on the intervention of the Greek Bishop, liberated the Turkish prisoners taken at Malaxa, and they arrived safely in Canea. It requires very little contemplation of these two pictures to decide on which side the forces of a free democracy should have been ranged.

But the Powers were about to commit themselves to a deeper and more deliberate infamy than any that had yet followed upon their unhappy intervention in this tiny island. From this point the course of events in Crete is of secondary interest and importance, and we may hastily summarise its chief points. Pillage continued in Canea and the other towns, and further engagements took place between the insurgents and Turkish troops. A part of Candia was burned down early in April, while the Seaforth Highlanders and the Turkish garrison

were engaging the insurgents. Twelve hundred British troops had now been despatched to the island, and further French detachments were also landed; so that. simultaneously with the outbreak of war on the Thessalian frontier, the Admirals found themselves able to replace the Turkish troops around Akrotiri by mixed foreign detachments, and to ship off some of the notoriously violent African and native Mussulmans. The issue of placards by Ismail Bey giving Greeks fifteen days to leave the island owing to the outbreak of war was regarded as another proof that the autonomy scheme was dead, and that the Sultan still ruled through the Admirals. The news of the defeat of the Greek army did not weaken the insurgent leaders, but it had its usual effect among the Mussulmans. The *Times* Correspondent, returning to Candia after six weeks' absence, found more personal security. "On the other hand, the Turks

have resumed an almost excessive confidence, and autonomy, so far, is practically a dead letter. All this might easily seem to point to the ultimate restoration of Turkish rule, for no step has been taken to withdraw a single Turkish soldier or official. The insurgents have absolutely no confidence in the intentions of Europe, and the Greek party among them have all the power. A serious question will arise if the refugees in Greece return to their houses in the towns now occupied by the Turks whose villages have been destroyed. The European troops are not in force enough to protect the towns. Food is becoming exhausted in the country, and desperation will result. I interviewed some of the chiefs in Akrotiri yesterday (May 1st). They are unshaken by the disasters to Greece. They prefer her, ruined, to Europe or autonomy. Europe must not expect any easier solution as the result of affairs in Greece. At present there are

practically no law courts, no council, and no gendarmes. The whole island is governed by military law." Such was the situation, such were the results of three months of European intervention, when, recalled to Greece, Colonel Vassos left the island with five members of his staff on May 6th; when, on May 23rd, the last Greek soldiers embarked, and the Powers were free to take up the threads they had so wantonly broken and ravelled.

THE WAR:
AND THE FUTURE.

X.

"Even when the sun of her glory had set, there was yet left behind an immortal spark of the ancient vitality, which, enduring through all vicissitudes, kindled into a blaze after two thousand years; and we of this day have seen a Greek nation, founded anew by its own energies, become a centre of desire and hope, at least to Eastern Christendom."

MR. GLADSTONE.

"O breezes of the wealthy west!
Why bear ye not on grateful wings
The seeds of all your life has blest
Back to their being's early springs,
Now that, though weak with age and wrongs
And bent beneath the recent chain,
This motherland of Greece belongs
To her own western world again?"

LORD HOUGHTON.

"It was a moral end for which they fought.
Nor hath that moral good been vainly sought;
For in their magnanimity and fame
Powers have they left, an impulse, and a claim
Which neither can be overturned nor bought.
Sleep, warriors, sleep! among your hills repose;
And when, impatient of her guilt and woes,
Europe breaks forth; then, shepherds! shall ye rise
For perfect triumph o'er your enemies."

WORDSWORTH.

THE WAR: AND THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER X.

CONQUERED GREECE.

The True Authors of the War: Russia as "Agent Provocateur." and Germany as "Organiser of Victory." — Ultimatum against the "Aggressor."—Injustice of the 1881 *Frontier. —Course of the War.—"Unto this Last."*

Mr. Henry Norman, who had been in close touch with the Greek Government and Court through the crisis, stated very positively that the Sultan did not at first wish for war, and would not have contemplated it but for German and Russian encouragement. He says:—

> "The blackest fact in the whole business knocks on the head all this cant about aggression. Greece did not want to fight Turkey. Turkey did not want to fight Greece. The Sultan and King George agreed to settle the affair amic-

> ably between them. Turkey was not allowed to do so. The two peoples were hurled at each other in the interests of the diplomacy of another nation. I know this for a fact, for I was kept informed of the details of the aborted negotiations."*

Sir Charles Dilke made a similar statement in a speech on May 12th, 1897 :—

> "Greece and Turkey were upon the point of coming to an agreement until Russia stepped in and compelled Turkey to declare war; he made this statement from personal knowledge of the facts."

Whether directed primarily against Germany, as by Mr. Norman, or against Russia, as by Sir C. Dilke—and the two statements are not at all inconsistent—there is an inherent proba-

* *Cosmopolis*, May, 1897. When Mr. Norman first telegraphed the statement to the *Daily Chronicle*, attention was called to it in Parliament. Mr. Curzon, without denying it, said he knew nothing of any independent Græco-Turkish negotiations. Mr. Norman then repeated his statement, adding that attempts had been made to re-open the overtures on both sides, and that "a most influential Russian statesman" had positively declared that this would never be permitted.

bility in the main allegation. Turkey was as likely as every other witness, before the war, to overrate the influence of Greek enthusiasm, and perhaps also to underrate her own frontier advantages, the capacities of her German mercenaries, and the power of the Emperors to keep the Balkan States quiet. It is nevertheless true that preparations had been begun, albeit very quietly (we know more of current events in Japan or Nyassaland than of those in Macedonia), even before the date of the "raid" of Prince George and Colonel Vassos. As far back as January 18th a Turkish Military Commission had been reported to be inspecting the defences of the Greek frontier, and another as busy on the Bulgarian border. From this point onward, the preparations were continued. The troops which could not be sent to Crete, and were, for the time being, a little *de trop* in Armenia, were concentrated at the foot of Olympus; so that in the middle of March, when the Greeks had 50,000 men

marking time in Thessaly, Edhem Pasha had a force ready of about the same strength, with large reinforcements on the way, the whole equipped and supplied more completely than could have been thought possible, or could have been possible, without that shady transaction which capped the fighting capacity of the average Turk with the science of Protestant Germany. Throughout the Empire the Moslem war-drum was beating; and even in Egypt the money which had been made by British wits, and at so heavy a cost throughout the whole field of British foreign policy, was being levied by nearly three hundred committees, with the ex-Minister Riaz Pasha at their head, and the Khedive as a leading subscriber. It must be remembered that at this moment the autonomy proclamation had not been posted in Canea—indeed, the Porte was just announcing with characteristic assurance that it "reserved to itself liberty to discuss with the Ambassadors the

form and the details" of the new *régime* in Crete, and, incidentally, explaining away the Tokat and Eguin massacres. Greece, for her part, maintained with difficulty a conciliatory attitude, though every day's delay made her ultimate defeat more sure. She had offered, wrote Mr. Norman, on May 19th,

> "(1) to recognise the temporary suzerainty of the Sultan in Crete; (2) to withdraw her fleet; (3) to place Colonel Vassos and his army under the command of any senior European officer to restore order; and I have no hesitation whatever in expressing the confident opinion that she would instantly agree both (4) to withdraw her army from Crete, and (5) to reduce her forces on the Macedonian frontier, if only the Powers would agree, when order is restored, to allow the Cretan people to decide for themselves what their future government shall be."

All these lines of compromise had been

refused by the autocratic managers of the Concert; and for a time the German proposal of a blockade of her capital and coast loomed heavily over Greece. That threat was quickly withdrawn in reply to British objections, for a double reason. In the first place, an effective blockade could hardly have been carried out without British help; in the second, the war, which the Emperors and every one else knew must follow such a measure, could now be as easily procured by other means. England, having practically annulled her consent to a blockade by announcing that she would take no part in it, proposed (March 24th) a neutral zone on the Thessalian frontier. Greece had already made a like proposal directly to the Porte; "but the latter, in consequence of the advice of Russia and Germany to push forward its armaments, did not entertain the suggestion."* The English proposal was similarly

* Reuter's Constantinople Correspondent, March 24th.

shelved. It was foredoomed, like nearly every good idea on the part of the British Foreign Office, by its feeble and tardy appearance. Then the Powers took out a final insurance policy in the form of a Note (April 6th), announcing—

> "That in case of armed conflict on the Græco-Turkish frontier all the responsibility will rest on the aggressor; that whatever may be the result of such a conflict, the Powers are firmly resolved to maintain the general peace; and that they have decided not to allow the aggressor in any circumstances to reap the slightest advantage from his action."

Superficially this diplomatic instrument, to which England gave in her adhesion, looks as fair as it was novel; but a moment's thought will disclose its true inwardness, and will show how easily the same form of words may cover the most selfish and the most unselfish designs. Ground has already been given for

the belief that the Emperors at least did not object to a war. If they had done, they would have accepted either of the two proposals of a neutral zone. Long before this, the wonderful efficiency with which the Sultan's German officers had directed the mobilisation of the Turkish troops was matter of common talk in Constantinople; and at this moment it was being noted that "Turkey, encouraged by the friendly counsels given her by Germany, and by her military vitality, is beginning to manifest an attitude which is far from pacific."* Russia and Germany at least wanted war, if they did not actually procure it, if the whole course of events in Crete were not deliberately designed to lead up to this point. Deliberately, or not, Crete was a mere counter in the game. Russia and her fellow-conspirator Germany wished for war because they wished for the humiliation and the weakening of Greece, and the further

* Reuter's Constantinople Correspondent.

demoralisation of Turkey. Hence the two-sided threat. The Note could not possibly mean simply what it appeared to mean on the face. How can it be decided who is the aggressor in such a case? The raiders of the Ethniké Heitairia, who went over the frontier in the last days of March and the early days of April, would probably have been adjudged the aggressors by a petty jury of London newspaper readers. But as a matter of fact, an act of distinct aggression had been committed by the Turks a fortnight before this in the Gulf of Arta, where Prevesa and other Ottoman positions were fortified in flagrant violation of the Berlin Treaty. Moreover, we have it on no less an authority than that of Mr. Curzon that the raids of the Greek irregulars were condoned—at any rate, up to the point at which irregulars had done their very worst, when the Turkish plans were complete, and when there could hardly be any going back, even if that had ever been intended or desired.

On April 12th—three days after the descent upon Krania and Baltino, which was the sole achievement of these mysteriously ineffective raiders—the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs said :—

> "The information that the (British) Government had received led them to think that this was an entirely unauthorised raid, and that it was not participated in by any of the Greek regulars. It had been disavowed by the Greek Government; while, on the other hand, the Government of Turkey had said that if this instance of provocation was not repeated they were not anxious to find in this particular one, as they might had they chosen, a *casus belli*."

Two days later M. Delyannis declared that the position on the frontier "was not created by Greece, but by the strange policy of a State which by its precipitate armaments had compelled Greece to assemble an army

capable of confronting all eventualities." On April 17th Turkey declared war. But, again, a declaration of war does not necessarily constitute its authors the aggressors in any quarrel, nor could it be intended so to do. There never could have been any idea of holding an inquest as to who provoked the hostilities. The phrase refusing "the slightest advantage" to the victorious aggressor is simply absurd, for no victor could be refused some compensation. The threat meant simply that the Concert, that is, the Emperors (having succeeded in localising the struggle), reserved to themselves the right of stepping in at the end and arbitrarily determining what trifling benefits they might, in consonance with their own paramount interests, allow the victor to secure. It was precisely the attitude of the old-time prize-ring bully; and gentlemen of that ilk have been known before now to arrange a fight, and make off with the property of the

combatants as soon as every one's back was turned.

The defeat of Greece may almost be said to have been planned in 1881, when the new frontier was obtained. Our sketch-map shows what was promised at Berlin and what was extorted three years later. Even the more extended limit was regarded in 1878 as an irreducible minimum by the friends of Greece. Mr. Gladstone said of it:

"It does not cover, or nearly cover, the whole of the territory inhabited by people properly Hellenic . . . and is far more confined than the principle on which it is founded. Secondly, it is greatly more restricted than the proposal actually made by England in 1862. On the cession of the Ionian Protectorate and the annexation of the islands to Greece, the Cabinet of Lord Palmerston, on his proposal and that of Lord Russell, unanimously determined on advising Turkey to make over to Greece the whole of Thessaly and of Epirus. Thirdly, it was a great abatement of what France had endeavoured in the *pourparlers* or bye-meetings of the Congress to obtain for Greece, and what she had only consented to forego in consequence of the prudent desire to neutralise the resistance of England." *

Whether Mr. Gladstone be right or not in suggesting that Lord Salisbury virtually

* "Greece and the Treaty of Berlin," *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1879.

promised support to the demands of Greece—which included Thessaly, Epirus, and Crete—when he promised them "careful consideration" at the Congress is a historic question of no great moment to-day. Lord Salisbury only took up the Greek case momentarily, as a weapon against Slavic advance, and dropped it as soon as the Bulgarian question had been settled. But the proposals ultimately carried were carried on the initiative of Great Britain. They were a poor return for the patience which, under English influence, Greece had shown during the hostilities of 1877. Yet this was nothing compared with what followed. In the later negotiations England, and England alone, was understood to oppose the cession of Janina to Greece—Janina which, as Mr. Gladstone put it, was "the historic cradle of the Greek nation," as Crete was the legendary cradle of Zeus, and which was reputed to contain twenty Greeks for every Mussulman inhabitant. Finally,

Greece saw herself cheated not only of Epirus, but also of the sacred mountain itself, the Olympian region, and locked behind a frontier difficult of defence and offering clear advantages for the attack.

All this is vital to an understanding of the events which must now be very summarily reviewed. In Epirus the Turks, with their hands heavy upon the necks of the long-enslaved inhabitants, almost tempted a Greek advance. That, they or their German guides knew, could not be the scene of the critical struggle. Confident in the strength of numbers and position, Edhem Pasha was able on the day of the declaration of war to deliver a combined attack around the whole of the crescent extending from Karia and Nezeros on the north-east, to Damasuli and Reveni on the south-west. From this arc six routes converged upon Larissa, which, on the west, was only twelve miles from the frontier. Not only were the frontier hills

the last defence of the Thessalian plain, but once either of the horns of the crescent broke through the Greek line, the position of the whole army was threatened, and Larissa might become a new Metz without the defences that enabled Metz to hold out. Such was the desperate case at the outset. Greece, so far as Thessaly went, had no hope but in a prompt victory promptly and successfully followed up. On the other hand, if the centre of the three-fold Turkish attack could be broken, communications from the west with Edhem's base at Ellasona would be cut. It was, therefore, in the Meluna Pass, with 20,000 men engaged, that the fiercest of the early fighting took place. The issue was not long left in doubt. It soon appeared that the Greeks were much overmatched in artillery; and by Sunday night, April 18th, though they continued to offer a stubborn and heroic resistance, they were being beaten back step by step from their positions. On

Monday, the 19th, the Turks were down on the spurs of the hills bombarding Turnavo. On the same day another Turkish force, greatly outnumbering the defenders, broke through the next pass to the south, after hard fighting, and captured the village of Kurtsiovali. At Mati a brave stand was made on Good Friday; but the Greek troops, said to be tired and hungry after the fasts of Holy Week, were demoralised by the Turkish artillery fire and the fear of being outflanked. Some blundering over signals was also alleged as a contributory cause of the rout. The extreme east of the Greek line had now been forced to fall back for safety, and the Turks came down from Karia, Nezeros, Rapsani, and the Salamvria valley, with comparative ease. Thus threatened on three sides, and feeling the overwhelming strength of the Turkish cavalry, as they had already felt that of the artillery, the Greeks found all the positions before Larissa untenable. Unfortunately, the army

was impeded to the end by the presence of a large and utterly helpless population; so that the disorderly retreat from Turnavo foreshadowed the still worse panic of the flight from Larissa on the night of the 23rd and 24th. Perhaps the forward positions were held too long; but Larissa itself might have been held longer, for it was not occupied by the Turkish advance-guard till the 25th, the head-quarters staff following on the 27th. The orderly behaviour of the Turks in Larissa became the common theme of the newspaper correspondents, whose astonishment was veiled, for the purposes of the censorship, by a thin veneer of applause. In Epirus the Sultan's levies were not kept so well in hand. But a revolt of Albanian regiments at Janina gave little or no help to the advancing Greeks, who got as far as Pentipegadia (leaving the Western Fleet to bombard Prevesa), but were then checked. A heroic engagement between a Greek battalion

and 4,000 Turks, in course of which the latter were repulsed several times, and twenty-two Greeks died in the attempt to recover their captain's body, was the prelude to defeat, on the 29th, and a panic-stricken flight back to Arta. In the meantime the Greek Eastern Fleet, which should have been landing detachments, however small, on the Macedonian coast to break the dangerously extended line of Turkish communications, had done nothing but bombard two or three small towns, destroying some stores there, and blockade the Gulf of Salonica. Nor was it afterwards destined to do more than capture Sir Ashmead Bartlett and some Egyptian soldiers on a Turkish transport.

The main army now held a long line north of the Othrys range—the old frontier—extending from Velestino, the railway junction, by Pharsala, to Karditza. Zarkos had been occupied by the Turks on April 28th and Trikkala on

the following day. At Athens, after a moment of revolutionary excitement, stimulated by allegations of incompetence and something worse against the staff of the Crown Prince and other commanding officers, the King saved his throne by dismissing M. Delayannis in favour of M. Ralli. The time for European intervention now seemed to have come, and Lord Salisbury proposed a Conference. But the new Ministry, disinclined to sue for peace, only reformed the military command; and Germany, supported by Russia and Austria (the three Emperors were more united than ever, the Kaiser having just been to Vienna and the Emperor Francis Joseph to St. Petersburg), refused to agree to an offer of mediation. The Turkish attack, delayed by the need of bringing up reinforcements, was therefore resumed. At Pharsala and Velestino hard fighting was continued from May 2nd to May 5th, the Greeks holding their own with great gallantry, especially at

the eastern end under Colonel Smolensky. At Pharsala, for the first time, the Foreign Legion took an active and gallant part in the fighting, as they did also in the subsequent fighting. On the 6th, in fear of a flank movement, the Greek forces on the west and centre were withdrawn, and pursued an orderly retreat to the stronger position of Domoko. Colonel Smolensky still held Velestino, and again repulsed a Turkish attack; but then withdrew on the 7th to Halmyros — necessarily abandoning Volo, which was occupied by the Turks without any objection from the panic-stricken remnant of the inhabitants—falling back thence to the Pass of Sourpi on the old frontier. During this time an inexplicable succession of disastrous errors was being developed in Epirus. Another advance had been made from Arta, and again, for lack of reinforcements, the troops had to fall back, with a lamentable accompaniment of distressed and panic-

stricken peasantry. For the panic there was but too good reason. Greek Government reports* alleged that in fourteen villages in one district the Turks first massacred all the women and children who did not escape, and then burned the houses down. Some hundreds of refugees were taken on board the Western squadron. Individual stories were told which rival in horror the worst in the annals of Turkish atrocity. The receipt of this news, confirmed from independent sources, compelled a new Greek advance upon Pentipegadia, fresh force being thrown into the attack upon the fortress of Prevesa. In the advance a number of bodies of men wounded in battle and afterwards murdered and mutilated were found.† This time the Greeks met with an earlier and more decisive check on the 14th at Gribova, a point near Arta, on the road to Philippiada, and were forced to

* See *Daily Chronicle*, May 24th, 1897.
† *Daily News* Correspondent.

retreat, though only after having, as the *Times* Correspondent testified, "greatly distinguished themselves, displaying splendid coolness, and proving that when well led on a properly and boldly conducted enterprise, they are as fine troops as one could wish to be with."

The Sultan was soon again exhibiting his scorn of the Concert and its tardy scruples. Colonel Vassos had been recalled from Crete on May 4th, and the Greek troops were in process of withdrawal. Germany, placated by this earnest of submission and by a formal acceptance of the international protectorate of the island, had removed her veto, and the mediation of the Concert had been offered on May 12th. The Hellenic Government at once accepted the offer, and threw themselves upon the mercy of the authors of their humiliation.

The Sultan said he would think about the matter after the end of the feast of Bairam, and Edhem Pasha pursued his plans for a great attack on the Greek positions at

Domoko. Considering this reply, and the way they followed it up, the Turks had little ground for complaining of the Greek action on the Epirus border. On May 15th, having received what was understood to be an assurance against Turkish attack, M. Ralli ordered the three Greek Army Corps—at Domoko, Sourpi, and Arta—to maintain a strictly defensive attitude. On the same day the Porte astonished the world by issuing the following ridiculous conditions, not of peace, but even of an armistice: (1) an indemnity of £T10,000,000; (2) the annexation of Thessaly to Turkey; (3) the abolition of the Capitulations under which Greeks, like other Europeans, in the Turkish Empire receive special protection; and (4) an extradition treaty which would rob every Macedonian and Cretan patriot of this one refuge from the Assassin. For a moment it looked as if the Islamic party were carrying everything before them at Constantinople, and as if the

time for a Russian descent upon the Golden Horn had at last come. On May 17th, the last and perhaps the most desperate battle of the campaign was fought, the Greeks defending their positions from Domoko to the sea against overwhelming odds, with a bravery the more conspicuous in an army whose spirit was supposed to have been broken by repeated defeat and the hopelessness of the struggle Repeated attacks were repelled but, having been outflanked on the right, a retreat to Lamia was ordered at daybreak on the 18th. In the Phurka Pass, on the old frontier, another overwhelming force of Turks attacked

---

* "The result of the day's prolonged and terrible struggle was that, so far as the Greek front and left were concerned, they had held their own with a bravery and sustained courage which even the enemy must acknowledge. Young troops and raw recruits, by their unswerving steadiness under a fire which might have demoralised veterans, had successfully resisted the assaults of hosts of the best disciplined soldiers I have ever seen in the field."—Reuter's Correspondent, May 21st.

"To the credit of the Greeks it must be said that they fought throughout the day with a courage which proves beyond dispute their excellent fighting quality. But the big battalions carried the day."—*Times* Correspondent.

the Greeks, who were retiring in good order, but again they were repelled. On the 19th, the Greek Army (including the force of Colonel Smolenitz, which had been brought round by sea from Halymros to Styleda) was ranged about Lamia, Molo, and Thermopylæ; and at noon on the same day an armistice was declared—two days after the Sultan had ordered Edhem Pasha to suspend hostilities, and a full week after the Powers had secured the submission of Greece; a week during which all humane influence had been set aside by the relentless Kaiser; two days of Turkish treachery very much more disastrous, if somewhat less gross, than the *battue* at Akrotiri. So much does the Sultan care for Europe when he has two Emperors at his back! When at last the peace came, it was due not at all to the "Concert of Europe," but to the separate and individual action of the Tsar. Abdul Hamid had flouted the Concert for a week, rejecting two Collective

Notes; but when peremptory orders came from St. Petersburg to stop the slaughter, the clamour of the war party was suppressed, and the armistice was instantly promised. A little fact is worth much argument, and we could have no more significant cap and conclusion of our review than this clear indication of the true centre of gravity in the Eastern Question.

Lord Salisbury had the opportunity of expressing English opinion on the whole train of events on the very evening of the suspension of hostilities. Beyond a verbal recognition of the Tsar's separate action, and of the impossibility of handing back any territory to the Turk, he gave no satisfaction to the feelings which this long succession of calamities had aroused. Instead, he warned Greece that she could not hope to escape from the results of what he called—without any more precise indication of what he meant—her "improvident and unwise and unjust

proceedings"; and he went on to launch the extraordinary suggestion that the 100 members of the House of Commons who, long before the outbreak of war, sent a mild and brief telegram of sympathy to the King of Greece, and sent it just because they could do nothing more effective,* that these gentlemen "are not only unwise and absurd, but that they are deeply guilty of all the blood that may be shed."† The reader may now draw his own conclusions as to the true causes of Greece's humiliation, the propriety of defending one's native land, the direction in which the blood-guiltiness is to be traced, and the share in the general responsibility for the ruin of Crete and her motherland which must be borne by the British Government. As to the future of

---

* Mr. Norman has shown that the telegram was perfectly understood in that sense in Athens. See *Daily Chronicle*, May 13th, 1897.

† Speech at Junior Constitutional Club, May 18th, 1897.

Greece, her "improvidence" or "unwisdom" will stand out in history glorified as the providence and wisdom of the worldly British Imperialist cannot be. She has had a terrible lesson, and she will now no doubt set herself earnestly to the cure of faults of which all her friends are conscious, though they may refuse to discuss matters quite irrelevant to the merits of the larger political question. Far beyond the shadow of these faults shine the laurels she has won. For the soldier of liberty defeat has no sting, the grave no victory. From our dull eyes that spiritual fire has passed. We stand and calculate, pass self-sufficient judgments on all puppets of the divine passion, laugh at the poets, and condemn the politicians, who dare betray a trembling sympathy. But for those worthy heirs of the world's dearest traditions there is no need of pity or praise, no place for blame. Generations of wrong are sloughed in the short days of sublime

revolt. Greece has lost much, but she has saved her honour, has lived up to her great name. Nor has she lost the future, as some short-sighted people think. And she has saved Crete. In hearts not dead to generous emotion Greece and Crete are indissolubly wedded; though they should bleed to death, the Sangreal of ultimate sacrifice is their loving-cup, their sponsors

"exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind."

XI.

"Our duty lies with the Concert, because it is the cause of peace; it is a Privy Council of Europe and a Cabinet of the Nations. It is the greatest advance in international law and international ethics this century has seen."

MR. CURZON (*April 3rd*, 1897).

"All comers may (as in a tournament of old) be challenged to point to any two years of diplomatic history which have been marked by a more glaring inequality of forces; by a more uniform and complete success of weakness combined with wrong over strength associated with right; by so vast an aggregation of blood-red records of massacre done in the face of day; or by so profound a disgrace inflicted upon and still clinging, as a shirt of Nessus, to collective Europe. . . . Two great States . . . have been using their power in the Concert to fight steadily against freedom. But why are we to have our Government pinned to their aprons? . . . It is time to shake off the incubus, and to remember as in days of old that we have an existence, a character, and a duty of our own."

MR. GLADSTONE (*March*, 1897).

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE "CONCERT OF EUROPE."

"Britain's Proper Policy": Prestige in Turkey, Support of Greece and the Balkan States.—Russia at Constantinople.—The Consolidation of Autocracy.—The Dual and Triple Alliances and the Concert.—The Reality behind—Conclusion.

Now let the model Minister of our hypothesis turn his glance backward through the past decade, and reflect for a moment upon the brighter Might-Have-Been. The main lines of the foreign policy which our best traditions and our highest interests suggested at an even earlier period than that now rise in clear relief above the mists of later impotence and shame. Underneath and above all, there should have been a ceaseless effort to win back the friendship of France, and to cement this, with the support of Italy, into a good fellowship that might be responsive to the needs of

democracy and freedom in every part of the globe. "Impossible," cries the sceptic, with half a wish prompting the thought. Impossible now, perhaps—certainly much more difficult—but that is our own fault. At any rate, the attempt has never been determinedly and continuously made, and that simply because the spirit of democracy and freedom, which has made some impression on the rest of our governmental machinery, has not penetrated to the Foreign Office at all. How else are we to explain the curious contrast between our spasmodic activity in the Soudan and our systematic inaction in regard to Armenia, Greece, and the Balkan peoples? Even if we had managed not to increase and embitter old differences, the prospect of a happier conjunction of influences would have been improved; and we should have been in a position to seize any of the several opportunities that have occurred to detach these sister Powers from the en-

slaving alliances into which they have been betrayed.

Then, in the near East itself, there were three main channels into which all our efforts (and we are regarding foreign policy now as a national subject, superior to party exigencies) should have been concentrated. The first, and, no doubt, most difficult, endeavour should have been the maintenance of our moral prestige at Constantinople. At least we might have guarded our agents against repeated insult; and we might have exhibited the virtuous minimum of saying only what we meant, and then of acting inflexibly up to that low limit. As it is, our

---

Italy is generally understood to be the "one Power" to which M. Hanotaux referred (February 22nd, 1897), as having proposed, in November 1895, that the Dardanelles should be forced, and the Sultan seized in his Palace. Mr. Curzon stated (February 26th) that Great Britain was not asked to act as "raider"; but the question is what reception Great Britain gave to the proposal. Why, indeed, have not the circumstances been made officially public? The incident looks like one of our many lost opportunities of forming a Concert of Freedom in opposition to the Concert of Despotism.

combination of feeble action and strong futile speech has been fatally subversive of that influence, to the establishment of which so much had been sacrificed in earlier years. To-day British prestige at the Porte is hardly worth a crooked sixpence, and this just because we have let slip the one good element in the bad old Turkophile policy—its sturdy resistance of the selfish encroachments of the Russian Autocracy—without the slightest apparent idea of a compensating *motif*. Every noisy re-assertion of Turkish "integrity," every nervous proclamation of the necessary unanimity of the Concert of Six, has been a fresh nail in the coffin of British influence in the Near East. Any unofficial Englishman in Constantinople will confirm this statement; and it is at least probable that our Ambassador himself would do so with the still stronger emphasis born of humiliating experience. The Sultan, with his Russian treaty in his strong box, knows

precisely what the Concert means. He reads the English papers, and knows better than any but a few Englishmen to what a depth of insignificance his quondam friend and protector has fallen. We are not basing this argument on what might or might not have been done by Great Britain on the Bosphorus in certain critical circumstances. We have shown that at least one great opportunity was missed there, just as, afterwards, great opportunities were lost in regard to Crete, in the summer of 1896 and directly after the landing of the Greek troops, and in regard to Greece before the declaration of war. But if the steady routine of British influence in past years had been what it should have been, these crises would never have arisen, or would have promptly solved themselves. The damning fact of the whole business has been that since the disappearance of Disraeli and the domestic preoccupation and retirement of Mr. Gladstone we have had no policy at

Constantinople at all, no clear thought, no strong will, nothing at all but a fatuous by-play with the rusty armour and ragged banners of the jolly old "Peace with Honour" days. There is no weaker chapter in the history of British statesmanship; and it would be a long time, even if we could be re-baptised to-morrow in the spirit of "Crommle and the Lord," ere we recovered the ground we, and, through us, liberty and progress, have lost.

The second line of action should have been a steady and sober encouragement of the Greek nation. Time was, and that not long since, when the best minds of England were committed to the Hellenic idea, and when, indeed, this tendency was so prevalent that, in sheer reaction, a school of half-informed writers and speakers began to protest against the "petting" of the "spoilt child of Europe." How slight was the ground for this protest events have shown. The romantic exaggerations of the friends of

Greece have done her cause an ill service if, as appears, they have raised expectations which could not possibly be realised within our time, or perhaps for many generations to come. What we may say is that, with the yoke of slavery but lately thrown off, and subjected to a multiform handicap by those terrible sponsors the Great Powers, this little Power has built up a civilised State in which the democratic spirit chafes under the alien yoke of militarism and royalty. Its Christianity is more honest, if less rational, than that of England. The patriotism which it evokes among its scattered sons is as much superior to the shoddy sentiment which feeds our Navy League as cheese is superior to chalk. It is at least as honest amid the husks of its poverty, as we are amid the rolling tribute money we rake in from the ends of the earth; and it sets us a rare example in some of the personal virtues. It leans to the west and north, as Russia does to

the east and south. It cherishes monuments and memories which are the second Bible of the Western world. Finally, it has carried its moral idea to the ultimate fiery ordeal of disastrous war, and—amid whatever circumstance of incompetent leadership—has shed its life-blood while we talk, and talk, and talk. It needed no such heroic climax to indicate that for the British Democracy the Greek Democracy might be (putting the matter on that low ground which the shopkeeper's temper demands) an invaluable ally. We wished to keep our own and other liberal influences paramount in the Mediterranean; we wished at least to establish a counterpoise to ever-expanding Slavia. The most obvious and most effective means of attaining these two vital ends of our policy (we still leave out the merits of Greece herself) was to foster the young Power whose history marked her as heir of a large part of the territory recovered from the Turk, whose position and

skill in seamanship promised her the command of the Levantine Seas, and over whose cradle the struggle between Russian and British influences had already begun. After the blunder—should we say the crime ?—of 1881, we could only wait for an opportunity of helping her to secure the Greek regions of Epirus and Macedonia. But on the side of the sea justice might have been promptly done, and at what a saving of later disaster! The Anglo-Turkish Convention being virtually dead, what could be more natural than the cession of Cyprus to the Hellenic Kingdom ? Tenedos, Lemnos, Mitylene, and the other islands would have naturally followed. Over Crete there need have been no great difficulty. If there had been, and if Cyprus and the Turkish Islands had not yet been ceded, that would have been the time for a demonstration that, in the eyes of Englishmen, the "independence and integrity" of British policy was at least as precious as the

"independence and integrity" of Russia's Ottoman dependency. Again, there was no British policy; and to-day we see the former partner of our infamous blundering and the ideal ally of our reformed policy—the conqueror and the conquered in the strife we have helped to procure—both at the mercy of the arch-enemy of every liberal influence in the Near East. The precious plaster which is to cure all the sores of Crete is now to be concocted in concert with a victorious tyrant, who will extort his pound of flesh, in some way or in some sphere, for every concession he makes. We have lost our one friend in the Levant, and have brought the general foe of freedom and progress a long step nearer. Yet the humiliation of England is not complete enough, but, according to the Prime Minister, we must subdue our sympathy to whispered humbleness, lest the truth offend the delicate ears of our great partners in the Concert!

Thirdly, we should have worked ceaselessly for the strengthening and for the mutual reconciliation of all the free Balkan States. One English name is still universally known and revered among these young peoples; for the rest, hardly a trace remains of our lately dominant influence. How it faded out has been partly told on an earlier page; but how widespread have been the evil consequences no man can yet say. To have superseded our open hostility to Austrian and Russian advance by a quiet but steady support of the independent states would have changed the whole after-course of affairs. It seems too late now—but is not really too late, let us hope—to revive the well-known ideal of the late Professor Freeman and other historian-politicians. At any rate, this is not the moment, when Servia and Bulgaria have made the extremity of Greece their opportunity, to talk of Balkan Confederation. The new bishoprics and schools

in Macedonia which they extorted from the Sultan in the midst of the crisis, at the cost of Greek influence, cannot be the whole price of their abstention from more troublesome proceedings. But whether Russia has again promised Bulgaria the piece of Thrace she would have had by the San Stefano Treaty, and Servia the reversion of Bosnia and the Herzegovina, or not, it is safe to say that any such union as that which is understood to have been lately concluded under Russian auspices between Montenegro, Servia, and Bulgaria, will be the beginning of the end of their sadly misused independence. That is a union of sheep under the presidency of the wolf. At the best the outlook is about as black as it can be. Thanks to the heavy hand of Russia, acting with and through the Ottoman cavalry, the little states and Macedonia itself have lost their great chance. Clouds lie thick upon the horizon of their future. Minotaur has finished

his two bloody feasts; the ruined homes of Armenia and Crete and Greece seem to ask—who will be the next victim?

While Great Britain has thus been receding steadily from her old place as champion of the young democracies, and sinking, always sinking, into the mire of a purely selfish Imperialism, the position has in other respects changed very much for the worse. Austria is what she always was; Germany and Russia are more hopeless than ever, and they are the predominant forces in the game. In Germany a madcap monarch plays antics which begin in farce and end at the shambles. The Kaiser, it appears, liked the borrowed splendours of his kiosk in Constantinople better than the spirit and independence of democratic Athens! One wonders whither has fled the visionary gleam with which German genius lit the opening century. Russia is, on a still larger scale, what the United States might have been

with a complete Autocracy instead of the Puritan Fathers to work its virgin soil. Every one in the small middle class, from which alone any check upon the Government can yet be hoped for, is busy with railways, or mines or ironworks or Siberian settlements. Radicalism exists, but makes very trifling progress, and does not count at all in foreign affairs, where the will of a handful of officials, dominated by the Lobanoff tradition, is absolutely supreme over both the old "European" policy and the old Slavophilism of the Katkoff school. Reaction, triumphant throughout the last reign, is now in full carnival. Outside the official class there are probably very few Russians who did not sympathise warmly with Greece in her double struggle in Crete and in Thessaly. Yet the suppression of newspapers which mildly echoed this sentiment awakened no protest worth mentioning. But if conscious Radicalism is not strong,

all the elements of a social revolt exist, and another economic crisis might create a movement even more dangerous than that of the late seventies. And just as, twenty years ago, the Tsar found refuge from domestic danger in a war against the Turk, so now the last stimulus might come from the same quarter for the completion of the work on which Russian diplomacy has been ceaselessly busy in the interval. It is beyond our purpose to trace the intricate, and in some parts obscure, story of the cultivation of jealousy and enmity among the natural heirs of the Turkish Empire, or to speculate as to the exact bearings of specific Russian designs upon our own "material interests" in the Levant. The effects upon our own position of Russia's southward march have perhaps been exaggerated. It is at least probable that, so far as we are concerned, Russia at Constantinople would be weaker than Russia behind that barrier, that since

the passage of the Dardanelles can hardly be a one-sided arrangement, we would have at least as great an advantage in the Black Sea as Russia would have in the Mediterranean. As to trade interests, Russia could get to Persia from Sinope or Trebizond as well as or better than from Constantinople. For the neighbouring states, it is quite another matter; very probably it is a matter of life and death. For the time being this discussion is somewhat beside the mark; for while Russia seems to have the substantial possession of Constantinople with none of its responsibilities, the substantial control of the Bosphorus with no corresponding freedom of access to other nations, she cannot, without a more overt breach of treaty obligations, threaten the integrity of the neighbouring states, which is the chief interest at stake. But if she should express a desire to regularise the position, it will be the duty of England and

France to demand that she shall at least give guarantees in regard to the Balkan countries in return for this single asset of the bankrupt Turk.

There is, however, a much larger than the local and strategic question; and it is with that larger and more threatening development that we are chiefly concerned. It is not Russia only that troubles us, or an advance, merely, of Russia into the Balkan Peninsula. As Crete is but a pawn in the game over Greece, and Greece is but a pawn in the game over the Turkish Empire, so, finally, the Turkish Empire is but a larger pawn in the game which the despots are playing on the great checker-board of East and West. The phenomenon which these pages are written to emphasise is the revival and consolidation of autocracy throughout the whole Eastern half (much the larger half) of Europe, and its steady encroachments upon the old homes of liberty and

progressive democracy. This is a recent and little-appreciated feature of European evolution. To the average newspaper reader Europe is divided into two camps, a Dual against a Triple Alliance, with a number of petty states, in their first or second childhood, ranged around in trembling expectation of the day when these systems will clash together. Such a division does formally exist, and it certainly corresponded in the beginning to actual facts. But while the appearance, under the fostering care of reptile pressmen and reptile politicians, has imposed itself more and more widely on the uninstructed mind, the reality has been steadily and at last rapidly changing; till we have to-day a totally different and, we do not hesitate to say, a more ominous, division of forces. Let us glance hurriedly over the leading combinations of the last twenty years. During the seventies, the jealousy and hostility of the Eastern Powers was still

an unmistakeably real thing, notwithstanding the fundamental community of interest among their rulers. In 1870 Russia gave Germany permission to attack France, in return for permission to attack Turkey. Five years later, when Bismarck wished to complete his ruinous work, Russia was less complaisant, and, with England, intervened to prevent a war of extermination. That was the beginning of a redistribution of power, which was to last really for some years, and which formally exists to the present day. When the Nihilist fever suggested to Alexander II. the old cure of a little blood-letting, his first idea, if Bismarck is to be trusted, was to fight Austria in Galicia. Now Bismarck got his revenge: in October 1879 the Austro-German Alliance (which was to develop into the Dreibund with the adhesion of Italy in 1883) was signed. In the meantim Russia—having squared Austria by allowing her the permanent occupation of

Bosnia and the Herzegovina—turned against Turkey. After the Berlin Congress, and with the accession of the Mujik-Tsar, the way was gradually prepared for that *rapprochement* between Germany and Russia which was formally acknowledged in the Russo-German secret treaty of 1884, and which, with a slight lapse during the late eighties, has continued since, and is now more effective than ever. The original Treaty lapsed in 1890; but there is little doubt that at least as important an agreement has since been made between the two Powers. Bismarck's invitation to the Tsar to seize Constantinople, in 1892, was an act of treachery which Italy and Austria could hardly have relished, even if it had succeeded in its apparent object of detaching France from Russia. Russia bided her time, confident now not only of Constantinople, but of the benevolent neutrality, or even support of Germany when it was wanted, but doubtful

still as to England, and probably as to Austria also. In 1895 the Russo-German Alliance was an effective force both in China and in Turkey. Then came the conference between the late Prince Lobanoff and Count Goluchowski in Vienna, and the Tsar's visit to Breslau and Görlitz—synchronising with the more aggressive turn of Russian policy at Constantinople, and the sudden switch-back of Austria in regard to Crete. When Count Muravieff took the reins of the Russian Foreign Office, last January, he had to present himself not only to Prince Hohenlohe and Baron Marschall von Bieberstein at Berlin, but also to the Kaiser himself at Kiel; and later, in April, followed the visits of the Austrian Emperor and his Chancellor to St. Petersburg, as the final seal of what the Tsar described as a "friendship cemented by a community of views and principles." It is the fact of this *entente* on which we lay emphasis, not its details, about which the

world may have to be content to speculate for a long time to come. The obscurest part of the question is the exact motive and objective of Germany; but, even there, there is a variety of dazzling possibilities—from a freer command of the Russian and South-Eastern Markets (a boon that would be worth much more to her than a new colony), up to the reversion of the Austrian throne and a Russo-German partition of South-Eastern Europe. Probably no very precise distribution of the prospective spoil has yet been arranged. Certainly, where the Kaiser is, there will always be spasms of jealousy and blurts of eccentric independence. But these little eruptions of a mind diseased serve the useful purpose of diverting attention from the essential fact of the situation, which is the close community and interdependence of Russian and German interests, and the necessary adhesion of Austria to the secret union. It was easy to throw over

Bismarck, but the Bismarckian policy had a strong foundation, not only in history, but in the very nature and needs of autocracy. Austria's position is a pathetic one, for she has least to gain and most to lose—as Germany has least to lose, and Russia has most to gain. But the Dual Monarchy is, as yet, strong enough to demand her price. And so they wait, these "two young despots," who so provoked Mr. Gladstone's righteous wrath; and Lord Salisbury affects to think they wait for love of peace! They wait at the doors of Abdul Hamid and Francis Joseph, but never idly, preparing steadily, as the sands run out, for the coming of the doomful hour.

Such is the combination to which France, Italy, and England have prostituted themselves during the last two years of shame. But with us alone has the act been completely gratuitous and inexcusable. The French people, at least, thought they had

got something substantial in return for their feasts-o'-lanterns and ready loans; and of course it never occurred to them that they would have to sacrifice to this exacting partner every sacred principle which their history enshrined. What they got was a carefully limited guarantee of defence against designs which Germany has probably not entertained at any time during the last ten years; a guarantee which lapses with the Triple Alliance—that is, when the moment comes for Germany, by herself or in conjunction with Russia, to strike for her great prize. For this slight boon France has given everything that made her what she was—principles, traditions, in a word, her honour, and, with that, millions of money and a slavish support of Russian projects everywhere. I bought a French comic paper in Moscow last summer in which the sense of this humiliation was expressed in two effective cartoons. One of these represented

a Parisian hoarding upon which an inscription of "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité," was just disappearing beneath festoons of flowers raised in welcome to the Tsar, and one bill-poster was crying out to the other to be quick and get that old placard covered, as his Majesty was coming. The Russian censor had carefully blacked out one half-page of the journal, but had left intact this and a companion piece of shame-faced fun. Had I to thank the normal stupidity of the censorship or the cynical blend of satisfaction and disgust with which the Russian official witnesses the complete self-abasement of his country's ally?

> "O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
> And patriot only in pernicious toils,
> Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?
> To mix with kings in the low lust of sway,
> Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey?"

And as Russia has nobbled France, so Germany has nobbled Italy, poor underfed, overweighted Italy, fallen so low from the

throne the poets made! Even here we have no right to scold, for, in these degenerate days of spendthrift inaction, there are few temptations to any people to link their fate with ours.

Indeed we have no right to point the finger of scorn anywhere. For England, too, whose boast has ever been her independence, is at last nobbled, shorn as Samson was shorn, with this added humiliation, that we must kiss the chains we have accepted and pretend to glory in our slavery. For the "Concert" of Six is just as surely the prison of liberal England as the Dual Alliance is the prison of liberal France, and the Triple the prison of liberal Italy. Where is the code of "international law and international justice" on which, as Lord Salisbury declares, the arbitrary doings of this committee of Chancellors are based? What was its origin, in what court is it administered?

* Speech at Junior Constitutional Club, May 18th, 1897.

On what sanction does it rely? What sanction, for instance, can the British Government claim in using forces on which the British taxpayer spends forty-five millions a year to lead an illegal blockade, to shell Christians fighting for freedom, to patch up the tattered fabric of Turkish integrity, and generally to do the dirty work of the three Emperors? Who made this "Cabinet of Nations" which — although it could not organise a police in Crete, and relies to this day upon ruffians from Zeitun—arrogates to itself the supreme right in Western affairs, and rules out all other nations, even in crises of life and death? On what principle of right and justice, personal, national, or international, does this all-powerful Concert, or do its individual members, defend their virtual consent to the desolation of Armenia, and to the ceaseless Russian intrigues which are destroying the Balkan States? Lord Salisbury exposed the gross unfairness of

meeting one party in the Cretan difficulty, the aggressor too, with paper schemes and verbal remonstrances, while the other was being answered in the effective voice of the cannon. What sudden change in law and ethics made that fair in 1897 which was unfair in 1896? While the Turks were fighting one set of Greek forces in Thessaly, the noble Six were fighting another set in Crete. While Italy was stopping the departure of Italian volunteers for Greece, her northern ally was sending the officers who organised the Turkish victory. While English and French Ministers were crying "Peace! peace!" (as if the Concert contained some virtue foreign to the other alliances to which all its parties save England were committed) at this moment Russia and Germany were procuring the war which was to humble their puny enemy. Are these the signs of international law and ethics, and the sureties of future peace? The misnamed Concert of

Europe has just one partial merit as compared with the "Holy Alliance" of eighty years ago: its pretensions are just a little less sickly; it does not launch its decrees (to recall the familiar words) in the name of "Dieu notre Divin Sauveur Jésus-Christ, le Verbe du Très Haut, la Parole de Vie," and "les principes et l'exercise des devoirs que le Divin Sauveur a enseignés aux hommes." But it is no more like the desired tribunal of international right than Lynch law is like the Queen's Bench Division or the Sessions at Old Bailey. Concerts of coercion, cabals of military despots, there have always been, and perhaps always will be, while Might usurps the place of Right. Such alliances, necessarily selfish and temporary, give no earnest of the spread of law and justice on the earth; they are, on the contrary, but an enlargement of the lawlessness prevalent in their component parts. It is no mere chagrin that British counsels have so little weight in

the present "Concert," but a consideration of the deeper characteristics of the European situation, which compels us to regard it with utter hopelessness. The only lasting guarantee of law, whether in one State or a group of States, is Democracy. In America and England, as in France and Italy, Democracy is an honoured principle, if not as yet a fully accomplished fact—that is why the collapse of the Arbitration Treaty (another victory for the Russo-German combination!) is so grievous a blow. The rulers of Russia, Austria, and Germany will be in a position to share in the administration of justice and law between nations when they have established justice and law within their own realms — not till then. Arbitration is a function of Democracy, a product of the free West. It is sad to reflect how little "the free West" counts for to-day; but we had better face the facts, and cease to look for grapes on thorns and figs on thistles.

Enough. There was one man who might have led us out of this bitter fog, as in

> "the true old times
> When every morning brought a noble chance,
> And every chance brought out a noble knight."

But alas! he, the King Arthur of our later day, "greatest friend and noblest foe," the forlorn hope of a failing chivalry, can only now look backward over the classic past, or if forward, only to

> "the island valley of Avilion,
> Where falls nor hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly."

THE END.

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS, LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

00028747

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Mr. Sangi
on 12 April, 2019